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THE GIPSY

BY

G.P.R. JAMES

SIXPENCE

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THE GIPSY.

A Tale.

By G. P. R. JAMES,

AUTHOR OF "MARY OF BURGUNDY," "DARNLEY," "RICHELIEU," ETC.

'Ah! what a tangled web we weave,
When first we venture to deceive.'
SIR WALTER SCOTT.

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THE GIPSY.

CHAPTER I.

On the road home.

At that time in the world's history when watches, in their decline from the fat comeliness of the turnip to the meagreness of the half-crown, had arrived at the intermediate form of a biffin—when the last remnant of a chivalrous spirit instigated men to wear swords, and to take purses on horseback—when quadrupeds were preferred to steam, sails were necessary—when Chatham and Blackstone appeared in the senate and at the bar, and Goldsmith, Johnson, and Burke, Cowper, Reynolds, Hume, and Smollett, were beginning to cumber the highways of arts and sciences—at that period of the dark ages, the events about to be related took place, in a county which shall be nameless.

It was on an evening in the early autumn, at that particular period of history which we have described, that two persons on horseback were seen riding through a part of the country, the aspect of which was one whereon we delight to dwell; that is to say, it was a purely English aspect. Now this character is different from all others, yet subject to a thousand varieties; for although England, in its extent, contains more beautiful scenes, of different kinds and sorts of the picturesque, than any other country under heaven, nevertheless there is an aspect in them all that proclaims them peculiarly English. It is not a sameness, far from it; but it is a harmony; and whether the view be of a mountain or a valley, a plain or a wood, there is still to be seen in each a fresh green Englishness, which—like the peculiar tone of a great composer's mind, pervading all his music, from his requiem to his lightest air—gives character to every object, and mingles our country, and all its sweet associations, with the individual scene.

The spot through which the travellers were riding, was a wide piece of forest ground, one might have supposed, from the nature of the scenery, to be as common to all lands as possible; but anyone who gazed upon it required not to ask themselves in what part of the world they were. The road, which, though sandy, was smooth, neat, and well tended, came down the slope of a long hill, exposing its course to the eye for near a mile. There was a gentle rise on each side, covered with wood; but this rise, and its forest burden, did not advance within a hundred yards of the road on either hand, leaving between—except where it was interrupted by some old sand-pits—a space of open ground covered with short green turf, with here and there an ancient oak standing forward before the other trees, and spreading its branches to the wayside. To the right was a little rivulet gurgling along the deep bed it had worn for itself amongst the short grass, in its way towards a considerable river that flowed through the valley at about two miles' distance; and, on the left, the eye might range far amidst the tall separate trees till sight became lost in the green shade and the dim wilderness of leaves and branches.

Amidst the scattered oaks in advance of the wood, and nestled into the dry nooks of the sand-pits, appeared about half a dozen dirty brown shreds of canvas, none of which seemed larger than a dinner napkin, yet which—spread over hoops, cross sticks, and other contrivances—served as habitations to six or seven families of that wild and dingy race, whose existence and history is a phenomenon, not amongst the least strange of all the wonderful things that we pass by daily without investigation or inquiry. At the mouths of one or two of these little dwelling-places might be seen some gipsy women, with their peculiar straw bonnets, red cloaks, and silk handkerchiefs; some, withered, shrunk, and witch-like, bore evident the traces of long years of exposure and vicissitude; while others, with the warm rose of health and youth glowing through the golden brown of their skins, and their dark gem-like eyes flashing undimmed by sorrow or infirmity, gave the beau idéal of a beautiful nation long passed away from thrones and dignities, and left but as the fragments of a wreck dashed to atoms by the waves of the past.

At one point, amidst white wood ashes, and many an unlawful feather from the plundered cock and violated turkey, sparkled a fire and boiled a caldron; and, round about the ancient beldame who presided over the pot, were placed, in various easy attitudes, several of the male members of the tribe—mostly covered with long loose great coats, which bespoke the

owners either changed or shrunk. A number of half naked brats, engaged in many a sport filled up the scene, and promised a sturdy and increasing race of rogues and vagabonds for after years.

Over the whole—wood, and road, and streamlet, and gipsy encampment—was pouring in full stream the purple light of evening, with the long shadows stretching across, and marking the distances all the way up the slope of the hill. Where an undulation of the ground, about half way up the ascent, gave a wider space of light than ordinary, were seen, as we have said, two strangers riding slowly down the road, whose appearance soon called the eyes of the gipsy fraternity upon their movements; for the laws in regard to vagabondism* had lately been strained somewhat hard, especially in that part of the country, and the natural consequence was, that the gipsy and the beggar looked upon almost every human thing as an enemy.

With their usual quick perception, however, they soon gathered that the travellers were not of that cast from whom they had any thing to fear; indeed, there was nothing of the bullying constable in the aspect of either. The one was a man of about six and twenty years of age, with fine features, a slight but well made person, and a brown, but somewhat pale complexion. His eyes were remarkably fine, and his mouth and chin beautifully cut; he rode his horse, too, with skill and grace; and withal he had that air of consequence, which is at any time worth the riband of the Bath. His companion was older, taller, stronger. In age he might be thirty-two or three, in height he was fully six feet, and seldom was there ever a form which excelled his in all those points where great strength is afforded without any appearance of clumsiness. He rode his horse, which was a powerful dark-brown gelding, as if half his life were spent on horseback; and as he came down the hill with the peculiar appearance of ease and power which great bodily strength and activity usually give, one might well have concluded that he was as fine-looking a man as one had ever beheld. But when he approached so as to allow his features to be seen, all one's prepossessions were dispelled, and one perceived that, notwithstanding this fine person, he was, in some respects as ugly a man as it was possible to conceive.

Thanks to Jenner and vaccination, we, the English, are now-a-days as handsome a people as any, perhaps, in Europe, with smooth skins and features as Nature made them; but in the times I talk of, vaccination was unknown; and whatever the traveller we speak of might have been before he had been attacked by the small-pox, the traces which that horrible malady had left upon his face, had deprived it of every vestige of beauty—if, indeed, we except his eyes and eyelashes, which had been spared, as if just to redeem his countenance from the frightful. They—his eyes and eyelashes—were certainly very fine; but they were like the beauty of Tadmor in the wilderness, all was ugliness around them. However, his countenance had a good-humoured expression, which made up for much; neither was it of that vulgar ugliness, which robes and ermine but serve to render more low and unprepossessing. But when first you saw him, you could not but feel that he was excessively plain; yet there was always something at the heart which made one—as the ravages of the disease struck the eye—think, if not say, 'What a pity!'

The dress of the two strangers was alike, and it was military; but although an officer of those days did not feel it at all scandalous or wrong to show himself in his regimentals, yet such was not the case in the present instance, and the habiliments of the two horsemen consisted as far as could be seen, of a blue riding-coat, bound round the waist by a crimson scarf, with a pair of heavy boots, of that form which afterwards obtained the name of Pendragon. Swords were at their sides, and—as was usual in those days, even for the most pacific travellers—large fur-covered holsters were at their saddle bows; so that—although they had no servants with them, and were evidently of that class of society upon which the more liberal-minded prey, and have preyed in all ages—there was about them 'something dangerous,' to attack which would have implied great necessity, or a very combative disposition.

As the travellers rode on, the gipsy men, without moving from the places they had before occupied, eyed them from under their bent brows, affecting withal hardly to see them; while the urchins ran like young apes by the side of their horses, performing all sorts of antics, and begging hard for halfpence; and at length a girl of about fifteen or sixteen—notwithstanding some forcible injunctions to forbear on the part of the old woman—sprang up the bank, beseeching the gentlemen in the usual singsong of her tribe, to cross her hand with silver, and have their fortunes told; promising them, at the same time, a golden future, and, like Launcelot, 'a pretty trifle of wives.'

In regard to her chiromantic science the gentlemen were obdurate, though each of them gave her one of those flat polished pieces of silver, which were sixpences in our young days; and having done this, they rode on, turning, for a moment or two, their conversation—which had been flowing in a very different channel to the subject of the gipsies they had just passed, moralising deeply on their strange history and wayward fate, and wondering that no philanthropic government had ever endeavoured to give them 'a local habitation and a name.'

* At various times, very severe laws have been enacted in all countries against gipsies. The very fact of being a gipsy, or consorting with them for a certain length of time, was, at one period, punishable by death in England. The greater part of these laws, however, had been repealed before the epoch at which the events recorded in this book occurred; and that wandering race were simply subject to the regulations respecting rogues and vagabonds.

'I am afraid that the attempt would be in vain,' answered the younger of the two to his companion. 'And besides, it would be doing a notable injustice to the profession of petty larceny to deprive it of its only avowed and honourable professors, while we have too many of its amateur practitioners in the very best society already.'

'Nay, nay! Society is not as bad as that would argue it,' rejoined the other. 'Thank God, there are few thieves or pilferers within the circle of my acquaintance, which is not small,"

'Indeed!' said his companion. 'Think for a moment, my dear Colonel, how many of your dearly beloved friends are there, who, for a small gratification, would pilfer from you those things that you value most highly! How many would steal from one the affection of one's mistress or wife! How many, for some flimsy honour, some dignity of riband or of place, would pocket the reputation of deeds they had never done? How many, for some party interest or political rancour, would deprive you of your rightful renown, strip you of your credit and your fame, and "filch from you your good name!"'

His fellow traveller replied nothing for a moment or two; unless a smile, partly gay, partly bitter, could pass for answer. The next minute, however, he read his own comment upon it, saying, 'I thought, De Vaux, you were to forget your misanthropy when you returned to England.'

'Oh, so I have,' replied the other, in a gayer tone; 'it was only a single seed of the wormwood sprouting up again. But, as you must have seen throughout our journey my heart is all expansion at coming back again to my native land, and at the prospect of seeing so many beings that I love: though God knows,' —he added, somewhat gloomily—'God knows whether the love be as fully returned. However, imagination serves me for Prince Ali's perspective glass; and I can see them all, even now, at their wonted occupations, while my vanity dresses up their faces in smiles when they think of my near approach.'

His companion sighed; and, as he did not at all explain why he did so, we must take the liberty of asking the worthy reader to walk into the tabernacle of his bosom, and examine which of the mind's gods it was that gave forth that oracular sigh. The simple fact was, that the picture of home, and friends, and smiling welcome, and happy love, which his companion's speech had displayed, had excited somewhat like envy in the breast of Colonel Manners. Envy, indeed, properly so called, it was not; for the breast of Colonel Manners was swept out and garnished every day by a body of kindly spirits, who left not a stain of envy, hatred, or malice in any corner thereof. The proper word would have been *regret;* for regret it certainly was that he felt, when he reflected that, though he had many of what the world calls friends, and a milky way of acquaintances —though he was honoured and esteemed wherever he came, and felt a proud consciousness that he deserved to be so—yet that on all the wide surface of the earth there was no sweet individual spot, where dearer love, and brighter smiles, and outstretched arms, glad voices, and sparkling eyes, waited to welcome the wanderer home from battle, and danger, and privation, and fatigue. He felt that there was a vacancy to him in all things—that the magic chain of life's associations wanted a link; and he sighed—not with *envy*, but with *regret*. That it was so, was partly owing to events over which he had no control. Left an orphan at an early age, the father's mansion and the mother's bosom he had never known; and neither brother nor sister had accompanied his pilgrimage through life. His relations were all distant ones; and though, being the last of a long line, great care had been bestowed upon his infancy and youth, yet all the sweet ties and kindred fellowship, which gather thickly round us in a large family were wanting to him.

So far his isolated situation depended upon circumstances which he could neither alter nor avoid; but that he had not created for himself a home, and ties as dear as those which fortune had at first denied him, depended on himself; or, rather, on what in vulgar parlance is called a *crotchet*, which was quite sufficiently identified with his whole nature, to be considered as part of himself, though it was mingled intimately—woven in and out—with qualities of a very different character.

This crotchet may be considered as a matter of his history; for it depended upon foregone facts, which must be here explained. It is sad to overturn all that imagination may have already done for the reader, on the very first news that Colonel Manners had a foregone history at all. He had not been crossed in love, as may be supposed, nor had he seen the object of his affections swept away by a torrent, burned in a house on fire, killed by an unruly horse, or die by any of those means usually employed for such a purpose. Neither had he to bewail the coldness nor the loss of her he loved, because, up to the moment when we have set him before the reader, he had unfortunately never been in love at all.

The fact is, that, during his youth, Colonel Manners had possessed one of the finest faces in the world, and every one of his judicious friends had taken care to impress deeply upon his mind that it was the best portion of all his present possessions or future expectations. By nature he was quite the reverse of a vain man; but when he saw that the great majority of those by whom he was surrounded admired the beauties of his face far more than the beauties of his mind, and loved him for the symmetry of his external person more than for the qualities of his heart, of course the conviction that, however much esteem and respect

might be gained by mental perfections, affection was only given to beauty, became an integral part of that fine texture of memories and ideas, which I look upon as the mind's innermost garment. Such was the case when, at the age of about twenty, he was attacked by the small-pox. For a length of time he was not allowed to see a looking-glass, the physicians mildly telling him that his appearance would improve, that they trusted no great traces would remain: but when he did see a looking-glass, he certainly saw the reflection of somebody he had never seen before. In the meanwhile, his relations had too much regard for their own persons to come near him; and when, after having purified in the country, he went to visit an antique female cousin, who had been a card-playing belle in the reign of his Majesty of blessed memory, King George the First, the old lady first made him a profound courtesy, taking him for a stranger; and when she discovered who he was, burst forth with—'Good God, Charles, you are perfectly frightful!'

To the same conclusion Charles Manners had by this time come himself; and the very modesty of his original nature now leagued with one of the deceptions of vanity, and made him believe that he could never, by any circumstances or events, obtain love. Nevertheless he made up his mind to his fate entirely, and determined neither to seek for, nor to think of, a good that could not be his. Indeed, at first, according to the usual extravagance of man's nature, he flew to the very far extreme, and believed that—putting woman's love out of the question—even the more intimate friendship and affection of his fellow-men might be influenced by his changed appearance. These ideas his commerce with the world soon showed him to be fallacious; but in the meantime they had a certain effect upon his conduct. Possessing a consciousness of great powers of mind and fine qualities of the heart, he determined to cultivate and employ them to the utmost, and compel esteem and respect, if love and affection were not to be obtained. In his course through the army, too, the sort of animosity which he felt against his own ugliness, together with that mental and corporeal complexion which did not suffer him to know what fear is, led him to be somewhat careless of his own person; and during his earlier years of service he acquired the name of rash Charles Manners. But it was soon found that, wherever the conduct of any enterprise was entrusted to his judgment, its success was almost certain; and that skill and intrepidity with him went hand in hand.

Gradually he found that, with men at least, and with soldiers especially, personal beauty formed no necessary ingredient in friendship; and with a warm heart and noble feelings—guarded by wisdom and discretion—he soon rendered himself universally liked and esteemed in the different corps with which he served, and had an opportunity of selecting one or two of his fellow officers for more intimate regard. Unfortunately, however, he saw no reason to change his opinion in respect to woman's love. Indeed, he sought not to change it; for, as we have already said, the belief that female affection could only be won by personal beauty, was one of those intimate convictions which were interwoven with all the fabric of his ideas. He ceased to think of it; he devoted himself entirely to his profession—he won honour and the highest renown—he found himself liked and esteemed by his military companions, courted and admired in general society; and he was content.

His companion, though he remarked it, made no comment on his sigh; for notwithstanding the most intimate relationships of friendship which existed between himself and his fellow traveller, and which had arisen in mutual services that may hereafter be more fully mentioned, he felt that the length of their acquaintance had not been such as to warrant his inquiring more curiously into those private intricacies of the bosom, from which such signs of feeling issued forth. He saw, however, that the proximate cause of the slight shadow that came over his friend, lay in something that he himself had said; and, putting his horse into a quicker pace as they got upon the level ground, he changed the subject.

As the strangers passed by the gipsy encampment, a flood of purple light, pouring from as splendid a heaven as ever held out the promise of bright after days, was streaming over the road; but as the travellers reached the flat and turned the angle of the wood where the road wound round the bases of the hills, the sky was already waxing grey, and a small twinkling spot of gold, here and there, told that darkness was coming fast. At the distance of about half a mile farther, the river was first seen flowing broad and silvery through the valley; and a quarter of an hour more brought the travellers to a spot where the water, taking an abrupt turn round a salient promontory thrown out from the main body of the hills, left hardly room for the road between the margin and the wood. On the other side of the river, which might be a hundred yards broad, was a narrow green meadow, backed by some fir plantings; and just beyond the first turn of the bank a deep sombre dell led away to the right; while the shadows of the trees over the water, the darkening hue of the sky, and the wild uninhabited aspect of the whole scene, gave a sensation of gloom, which was not diminished by a large raven flapping heavily up from the edge of the water, and hovering with a hoarse croak over some carrion it had found amongst the reeds.

'This is a murderous-looking spot enough!' said Colonel Manners, turning slightly towards De Vaux, who had been silent for some minutes.

'Well may it be so!' answered his companion abruptly: 'for on this very spot my uncle was murdered twenty years ago.'

'Indeed!' exclaimed his fellow traveller: 'but on reflection,' he added, 'I remember having heard something of it, though I was then a boy, and have forgotten all the circumstances.'

He spoke as if he would willingly have heard them again detailed; but, for a moment or two, De Vaux made no reply; and the next instant the sound of a horse's feet at a quick trot suddenly broke upon the ear, and called the attention of both. In a minute more, a horseman wrapped in a large roquelaure passed them rapidly; and though he neither spoke nor bowed, his sudden appearance was enough to break off the thread of their discourse. When he was gone, Colonel Manners felt that though De Vaux might take it up again if he would, he himself could not in propriety do so. De Vaux, however, was silent; for he was not one of those men to whom the accidents and misfortunes of their friends and relations furnish matter for pleasant discourse; and the topic of course dropped there. Perhaps, indeed, the younger traveller showed some inclination even to avoid the subject, for he led the conversation almost immediately into another channel, dwelling with enthusiasm upon the pleasures that his boyhood had known, and the hopes which his return had re-awakened in his bosom: and yet there was mingled with the whole a touch of fastidiousness which contrasted strangely enough with the warmth of feeling and expression to which he gave way in other respects. He seemed to doubt the very love the happiness of which he pictured so brightly; he even seemed, in some degree, to sneer at himself for giving the credence that he did to those things which he most desired to believe true.

But Edward de Vaux had been brought up in a fastidious school. He had lived at the acmé of fortune, and this we hold to be the true way of becoming misanthropical. It is nonsense to suppose that a man turns misanthrope in consequence of great misfortunes. No such thing! it is by being fortunate *ter et amplius*.

Edward de Vaux stood at the climax of fortune. Never in his life had he known what a serious reverse or great misfortune is; and consequently he had gathered together all the petty vexations and minor disappointments that he had met with, and, to use the term of Napoleon Buonaparte, had nearly stung himself to death with wasps. Perhaps, too, he might be fastidious by inheritance, for his father was so in a still higher degree than himself; though in the father it showed itself in irritable impatience, and a sort of contempt both tyrannical and insulting towards those whom he disliked; while in the son, mingled with, if not springing from, finer feelings: passing, too, through the purifying medium of a gentler heart, and corrected by a high sense of what is gentlemanly, his fastidiousness seldom showed itself except in a passing sneer, at anything that is false, affected, or absurd.

As he now rode onwards to rejoin those friends whom he had not seen for nearly three years, accompanied by a companion who had never seen them at all, the little world of his heart was in a strange commotion. All the joy which an affectionate disposition can feel was rising up at every point against the sway of cold propriety, and yet he tormented himself with a thousand imaginary annoyances. Now he fancied that the delight he felt and expressed was undignified, and might lower him in the eyes of his companion; now he chose to doubt that his reception from those he had left behind would be warm enough to justify the exuberant pleasure that he himself experienced; while, keenly alive to the slightest ridicule, he shrunk from the idea of exposing, even to his dearest friend, one single spot in his heart to which the lash could be applied.

As they proceeded, the purple of the evening died entirely away, and a grey dimness fell over tree, and stream, and hill. Star by star looked out, grew brighter and brighter, till at length all was night.

In the lapse of ten minutes more, the road had conducted them to a steep bank overhanging a wider part of the valley, and here Colonel Manners divined—for he could scarcely be said to see—that a scattered but considerable village lay before them. Up and down the sides of the hill, a hundred twinkling lights in cottage windows were sprinkled like glow-worms amongst the darker masses of orchard and copsewood; and now and then as the travellers advanced, a bright glare suddenly flashed forth from some opening door; and then again was as speedily extinguished, when the entrance or the exit of the visiter was accomplished. Some watchful dog, too, caught the sound of horses' feet, and, after one or two desultory barks, set up his tongue into a continual peal. His neighbours of the canine race took the signal, and—not at all unlike the human species—ever inclined to clamour, yelped forth in concert, so that the village was soon one continued roar with the efforts of various hairy throats.

The salutation, however, was sweet to Edward de Vaux, for it spoke of home—or at least of a dwelling that was dearer than any other home he might possess; and, pausing a moment, he pointed onward to a spot where, on the edge of the hill beyond the village, might be seen, cutting sharp upon the pale silvery grey of the western sky, the dark outline of a large house, with a plentiful supply of chimneys, of an architecture somewhat less light and fanciful than that of Palladio, but very well suited to a dwelling in the land of peace and comfort.

'That is my aunt's house,' said De Vaux, 'and, though it is nearly three miles by the road from the spot where that horseman passed us, it is not much more than three quarters of a mile by the path over the hill. But that path,' he added, 'is impracticable for horses, or I should certainly have risked breaking your

neck, Manners, rather than take this long tedious round.'

Now, strange to say, the round that they had taken seemed longer and more tedious to Edward de Vaux, when he came within sight of the mansion which was to end his journey, than it had done at any other moment of the ride. But so it was; and without inquiring into things with which we have nothing to do, we may conclude that he felt some of those vague, unreasonable doubts and apprehensions, which almost every one experiences on the first view of one's home after a long absence—those fears which are the very children of our hopes—that anxiety which the uncertainty of human fate impresses upon our minds, till we are *sure* that all is well.

Whatever it was that Edward de Vaux felt, although the round seemed a long one, and the time tedious that it had consumed, he yet drew in his rein, not so as to bring his horse quite up, but to check him into a walk; while he pointed out the house to his companion, and gazed at its dark and distant mass himself. At that very moment, a single ray glimmered in one of the windows, passed on into another, and then three windows suddenly streamed forth with light. It looked like a welcome; it looked like a beacon to say that all was well; and though no man in the present day cares a straw for things that in other years, when skilfully applied, have won battles and overthrown dynasties—I mean omens—yet every man has a silent, unacknowledged, foolish little system of augury of his own; and Edward de Vaux and his companion at the sight of this dexter omen, set spurs to their horses, and rode merrily on their way.

CHAPTER II.

PHAROLD, THE GIPSY.

In the same wood which we have already described as clothing the hills and skirting the road over which De Vaux and his companion were travelling, but in a far more intricate part thereof than that into which the reader's eye has hitherto penetrated, might be seen, at the hour which we have chosen for the commencement of our tale, the figure of a man creeping quietly but quickly along a path so covered by the long branches of the underwood, that it could only be followed out by one who knew well the deepest recesses of the forest.

This personage was spare in form, and without being tall as compared with other men, he was certainly tall in reference to his other proportions. His arms were long and sinewy, his feet small, his ankles well turned, and his whole body giving the promise of great activity, though at a time of life when the agile pliancy of youth is generally past and gone. He was dressed in an old brown long coat, 'a world too wide' for his spare form, so that, as he crept along with a quiet serpentine turning of his body, he looked like an eel in a great coat, if the reader's imagination be vivid enough to call up such an image. A hat, which had seen other days, and many of them, covered his brows; but under that hat was a countenance which, however ordinary might be the rest of his appearance, redeemed the whole from the common herd. The complexion spoke his race: it was of a pale greenish tint, without any rosier hue in the cheeks to enliven the pure gipsy colour of his skin. His nose was small, and slightly aquiline, though of a peculiar bend, forming, from the forehead to the tip, what Hogarth drew for the line of beauty. The eyebrows were small, and pencilled like a Circassian's, and the eyes themselves, shining through their long, thick, black eyelashes, were full of deep light, and—to use a very anomalous crowd of words—of wild, dark, melancholy fire. His forehead was broad and high; and the long, soft, glossy, black hair, that fell in untrimmed profusion round his face, had hardly suffered from the blanching hand of time, although his age could not be less than fifty-five or fifty-six, and might be more. His teeth, too, were unimpaired, and of as dazzling a whiteness as if beetle and recca had all possessed the properties their vendors assert, and had all been tried on them in turn.

Such was his appearance, as, creeping along through the brushwood with a stealthy motion, which would hardly have disturbed the deer from their lair, he made his way towards the spot where we have seen that his fellows were encamped. He was still far distant from it, however; and although it was evident that he was, or had been, well acquainted with the intricacies of the wood, yet it appeared that some leading marks were necessary to guide him surely on his way; for ever and anon, when he could find a round knob of earth raising itself above the rest of the ground, he would climb it, and gaze for several moments over the world of wood below him, rich in all the splendid hues of autumn, and flooded by the purple light of the evening.

Ever, as he thus looked out, there might be seen a column of bluish white smoke rising from a spot at a mile's distance; and—after towering up solemnly in the still air for several hundred feet—spreading into light rolling clouds, and drifting amongst the wood. Thitherward, again, he always turned his course; and any one who has remarked the fondness of gipsies for a fire, even when they have no apparent necessity for it, will little doubt that the smoke, or the flame, serves them, on many occasions, for a signal or a guide.

As progression through thick bushes can never be very rapid, the evening had faded nearly into twilight ere the gipsy reached the encampment of his companions. The hearing of those whose safety often depends upon the sharpness of their ears, is, of course, sufficiently acuminated by habit; and although his steps

were, as we have shown, stealthy enough, his approach did not escape the attention of the party round the fire. We have seen that they had taken but little apparent notice of the two travellers, who had passed them about a quarter of an hour before; but the sound of quiet footsteps from the side of the wood, the moving of the branches, and the slight rustle of the autumn leaves, caused a far greater sensation. Two or three of the stoutest started instantly on their feet, and watched the spot whence those sounds proceeded, as if not quite sure what species of visiter the trees might conceal. The moment after, however, the figure we have described, emerging into the more open part of the wood, seemed to satisfy his comrades that there was no cause for apprehension; and those who had risen, turned towards the others, saying, 'It is Pharold,' in a tone which, without expressing much pleasure, at all events announced no alarm.

Several of the young gipsies sprang up, shaking their many-coloured rags, and ran on to meet the new comer; while the elder members of the respectable assemblage congregated under the oaks, though they did not show the same alacrity, perhaps, as the younger and more volatile of the party, received him with an air in which reverence was mingled with a slight touch of sullenness.

'Who has passed since I left you, William?' was the first question of the gipsy on his return, addressing one of the young men who had been lying nearer than the others to the high road, and by whose side appeared, as he rose, a most portentous cudgel.

'A woman with eggs from the market; three labourers from the fields; a gamekeeper, who damned us all, and said, if he had his will, he would rid the country of us; and two gentlemen on horseback, who gave Leena a shilling;' was the accurate reply of the young gipsy. The other, who has been called Pharold, at first, paid no attention to any part of the account, except the apparition of the two gentlemen on horseback; but in regard to them he asked many a question—were they old or young—what was their appearance—their size—their apparent profession?

To all these inquiries he received such correct and minute replies, as showed that the seeming indifference with which the gipsy had regarded the two travellers was anything but real; and that every particular of their dress and circumstances, which eye could reach or inference arrive at, had been carefully marked, and, as it were, written down on memory.

The language which the gipsies spoke amongst themselves was a barbarous compound of some foreign tongue and of English, mingled with many a choice phrase from the very expressive jargon called slang. Thus, when the gipsy spoke of the gentlemen he called them *raye*, when he spoke of the peasant he termed him *gazo*; but as the gipsy tongue may, probably, not be very edifying to the reader, the conversation of our characters shall continue to be carried on in a language which is more generally intelligible.

The account rendered by the young man, however, did not seem satisfactory to the elder, who twice asked if that were all; and then made some more particular inquiries concerning the gamekeeper, who had expressed such friendly sentiments towards his tribe.

'Keep a good watch, my boys,' he said, after musing for a moment or two on the answers he received. There is danger stirring abroad; and I fear that we shall be obliged to lift our tents, and quit this pleasant nook.'

'The sooner we quit it the better, I say,' cried the beldame, who had been tending the pot. 'What the devil we do here at all, I don't know. Why, we are well nigh four miles from a farm-yard, and five from the village; and how you expect us to get food I don't understand.'

'Are there not plenty of rabbits and hares in the wood?' said the other, in reply; 'I saw at least a hundred run as I crossed just now?'

'But one cannot eat brown meat for ever,' rejoined the dame; and tiny Dick was obliged to go five miles for the turkey in the pot; and then had very near been caught in nimming it off the edge of the common.'

'Well, give me the brown meat for my share,' answered Pharold; 'I will eat none of the white things that they have fattened, and fed up with their hoarded corn, and have watched, early and late, like a sick child. Give me the free beast that runs wild, and by nature's law belongs to no one but him who catches it.'

'No, no, Pharold, you must have your share of turkey, too,' cried the old lady, for although it may appear strange, yet as there is honour amongst thieves, so there may be sometimes that sort of generosity amongst gipsies, which led the good dame, who, on the present occasion, presided over the pot, to press Pharold to his food with hospitable care, declaring that he was a 'king of a fellow, though somewhat whimsical.'

The gipsies now drew round their fire, and scouts being thrown out on either side to guard against interruption, the pot was unswung from the cross bars that sustained it, trenchers and knives were produced, and with nature's green robe for their table-cloth, a plentiful supper of manifold good things was spread before the race of wanderers. Nor was the meal unjoyous, nor were their figures—at all times picturesque—without an appearance of loftier beauty and more symmetrical grace, as, reclining on triclinia of nature's providing, with the fire and the evening twilight casting strange lights upon them, they fell into those free and easy attitudes which none but the children of wild activity can assume. The women of the party had all come forth from their huts, and amongst them were two or three lovely creatures as any race ever produced, from the chosen Hebrew to the beauty-dreaming Greek. In truth, there seemed more women than men of the tribe, and

there were certainly more children than either; but due subordination was not wanting; and the urchins who were ranged behind the backs of the rest, though they wanted not sufficient food, intruded not upon the circle of their elders.

Scarcely, however, had the first mouthfuls been swallowed, and the cup passed its round, when the farthest scout—a boy of about twelve years of age—ran in, and whispered the mystical words, 'A horse's feet!'

'One—or more than one?' was the instant question of Pharold, while his companions busied themselves in shovelling away the principal portions of their supper, and leaving nothing but what might pass for very frugal fare indeed. 'Only one!' replied the boy, running back to his post; and the next instant another report was made to the effect that a single horseman was coming up the road at full speed, together with such personal marks and appearances as the dim obscurity of the hour permitted the scouts to observe. All this, be it remarked, was carried on with both speed and quietude. The motions of the scouts were all as stealthy as those of a cat over a dewy green, and their words were all whispered; but their steps were quick, and their words were few and rapid.

The motions of the horseman, however, were not less speedy; and ere much counsel could be taken, he was upon the road, exactly abreast of the spot where the gipsies' fire was lighted. There he drew in his reins at once; and, springing to the ground, called aloud to one of the boys, who was acting sentinel, bidding him hold his horse.

'It is he!' said Pharold, 'it is he!' and, rising from the turf, he turned to meet the stranger, who on his part approached directly to the fire, and at once held out his hand to the gipsy. Pharold took it, and wrung it hard, and then stood gazing upon the countenance of the stranger, as the fitful firelight flashed upon it, while his visiter fixed his eyes with equal intensity upon the dark features of the gipsy; and each might be supposed to contemplate the effect of time's blighting touch upon the face of the other, and apply the chilling tidings such an examination always yields to his own heart.

It is probable, indeed, that such was really the case: for the first words of the gipsy were, 'Ay, we are both changed indeed!'

'We are so, truly, Pharold,' replied the stranger; 'so many years cannot pass without change. But did my last letter reach you?'

'It did,' replied the gipsy, 'and I have done all that you required.'

'Did you obtain a sight of him?' demanded the other, eagerly.

'I did,' answered the gipsy, 'in the park, as he walked alone—I leaped the wall, and——"

Hitherto, all those first hurried feelings which crowd upon us when, after a long lapse of years, we meet again with some one whom circumstances have connected closely with us in the past, had prevented the gipsy and his companion from remarking—or rather from remembering—the presence of so many witnesses. In the midst of what he was saying, however, the eye of Pharold glanced for a moment from the face of his companion to the circle by the fire, and he suddenly stopped. The other understood his motive at once, and replied, 'True, true; let us come away for a moment, for I must hear it all.

'Of course,' answered Pharold, 'though you will hear much, perhaps, that you would rather not hear. But come, let us go into the road; we shall be farther there from human ears than anywhere else.'

As they walked towards the highway both were silent; for there is not such a dumb thing on the face of the earth as deep emotion; and for some reason, both the stranger and the gipsy were more moved by their meeting in that spot than many less firm spirits have been on occasions of more apparent importance.

After thus walking on without a word for two or three hundred yards, the gipsy abruptly resumed his speech. 'Well, well,' he said, 'when we are young we think of the future, and when we are old we think of the past; and, by my fathers, there is no use of thinking of either! We cannot change what is coming, nor mend what is gone; but, as I was saying, I have seen him; I found that he walked every day in the park by himself, and I watched his hour from behind the wall, and saw him come up the long avenue that leads to the west gate—you remember it?'

'Well,' answered the other, 'but how did he look?—Tell me, Pharold, how did he look?'

'Dark enough, and gloomy,' answered the gipsy: 'he came with his hands behind his back, and his hat over his brows, and his eyes bent upon the ground; and ever as he walked onward his white teeth—for he has fine teeth still—gnawed his under lip; and, for my part, if my solitary walk were every day to be like that, I would not walk at all; but would rather lie me down by the roadside and die at once. Well, then, often too as he came, he would stop and fix his eyes upon one particular pebble in the gravel, and stare at it, as if it had been enchanted; and then, with a great start, would look behind him to see if there was any one watching his gloomy ways; or would suddenly whistle, as if for his dogs, though he had no dog with him.'

His companion drew a deep sigh, and then asked, 'But how seemed he in health, Pharold? Is he much changed? He was once as strong a man as any one could see—does he still seem vigorous and well?'

'You would not know him,' replied the gipsy, and was going on, but the other broke in vehemently.

'Not know him? That I would! he exclaimed, 'though age might have whitened his hair, and dimmed his eyes—though suffering

might have shrivelled his flesh, and bowed his stature—though death itself, and corruption in its train, might have wrought for days upon him, I would know him, so long as the dust held together.—What, Pharold, not know him?—*I* not know *him?*'

'Well,' answered the gipsy, 'I meant that he was changed—far more changed than you are—you were a young man when last we met, at least in your prime of strength, and now you are an old one, that is all. But he—he does not seem aged, but blighted. It is not like a flower that has blown, and bloomed, and withered, but one that with a worm in its heart has shrunk, and shrivelled, and faded. He is yellower than I am, though I gain my colour from a long race who brought it centuries ago from a land of sunshine, and he has got it in less than twenty years from the scorching of a heart on fire. He is bent, too; and his features are as thin as a heron's bill.'

'Sad—sad—sad,' said his companion; 'but how could it be otherwise?—Well, what more? —Tell me what happened when you met him? Did he know you?'

'At once,' answered the gipsy; 'no, no; I have seen one of my tribe with a hot iron and an oaken board make paintings of men's faces that no water would wash out; and none should know better than you, that my face has been burnt in upon his heart in such a way that it would take a river of tears to sweep away the marks of it. When I saw that he was near, I sprang over the wall into the walk, and stood before him at once. When first he saw me he started back, as if it had been a snake that crossed him; but the moment after, I could see him recollect himself; and I knew that he was calculating whether to own he knew me, or to affect forgetfulness. He chose the first, and asked mildly enough what I did there. "I thought you were out of the kingdom," he said, "and had promised Sir William Ryder never to return." I replied that he said true, and that I had not returned till Sir William Ryder had told me to do so,'

'What said he then?' asked the other, eagerly; 'what said he to that?'

'He started,' replied the 'gipsy, 'and then muttered something about a villain and betraying him; but the moment after, as you must have seen him do long ago, he gathered himself up, and looking as proud and stern as if the lives of a whole world were at his disposal, he asked, what was Sir William Ryder's motive in bidding me return. "Some motive, of course, he has," he added, looking at me bitterly. "Does he intend to play villain, or fool, or both, —for whatever folly his knavery may tempt him to commit, he will only injure himself; for at this time of day it is somewhat too late to try to injure *me*," and as he spoke,' continued the gipsy, 'he nodded his head gravely but meaningly, as if he would have said, "You know that I speak truth."'

The lip of the stranger curled as his companion related this part of a conversation in which he seemed to take no slight interest.

'I told him,' continued the gipsy, 'as you directed me, that his friend stood in some need of five thousand pounds, and trusting to his Lordship's kindness and generosity, had directed me to come back and apply to him for that sum. So when he heard that, his face grew very dark; and, after thinking for a minute or two, he looked up two of the walks, for we stood in the crossing, to see if he could see any of the park-keepers, to give me into their hands—I know that was what he wanted. However, there was no one there; and he answered, looking at me as if he would have withered me into dust, "Tell Sir William Ryder, wherever he is, that he shall wring no more from me. I have sent him his thousand a year regularly, and if any of the packets missed him, he should have let me know; but I will be no sponge to be squeezed for any man's pleasure; nor do I care," he went on, "who conspires to bring any false accusation against me. I am prepared to meet every charge boldly, and to prove my innocence before the whole world, if any one dare accuse me." He spoke very firmly,' added the gipsy; 'and as long as he continued speaking I kept my eyes upon the ground, though I felt that his were bent upon me: but the moment he had done, I raised mine and looked full upon his face, and his lip quivered and his eye fell in a moment.'

'Did he hold his resolution of refusing?' demanded the other, over whose countenance, as he listened, had been passing emotions as various as those which the gipsy had depicted; 'did he hold his resolution to the end?'

'Firmly!' replied Pharold, 'though he softened his tone a great deal towards me. He said he was only angry with Sir William Ryder, not with me, and asked where I had been during so many years; and when I told him, in Ireland, he replied, that it was a poor country: I could not have made much money there; and then he talked of other days, when the old lord took me to the hall because I was a handsome boy, and kept me for two years and more, and would have had me educated; and he vowed I did mighty wrong to run away and join my own people again, and he took out his purse and gave me all that it contained, and was sorry that it was no more; but if I would tell him, he said, where we were lying, he would send me more, for old acquaintance sake; and all the while he talked to me he looked up the walks to see if he could see the park-keepers, to have me taken up, and to accuse me of robbing him, or of some such thing. I could see it all in his eye; and so I told him that we were lying five miles to the east; and took leave of him civilly, and came away, laughing that he should think I was fool enough to fancy he and I could ever do any thing but hate each other, to our dying day.'

His companion mused for several minutes; and even when he did speak, he took no notice either of the gipsy's suspicions or of the news

he gave him, but rather,—as one sometimes does when one wishes any thing just heard to mature itself in the mind, ere farther comment be made upon it,—he linked on what he next said, to that part of Pharold's speech which might have seemed the least interesting, namely, the gipsy's own history; and yet, although he certainly did this, in order to avoid, for the time, the more important parts of his narrative, he did not do it with the commonplace tone of one who speaks of feelings with which he has no sympathy: on the contrary, he spoke with warmth, and kindness, and enthusiasm; and expressed profound regret that the gipsy had, in his boyhood, thrown away advantages so seldom held out to one of his tribe.

'Why? why?' cried the gipsy, 'why should you grieve? I did but what you have done yourself. I quitted a life of sloth, effeminacy, and bondage, for one of ease, freedom, and activity. I left false forms, unnatural restraints, enfeebling habits—ay! and sickness, too, for the customs of my fathers, for man's native mode of life, for a continual existence in the bosom of beautiful nature, and for blessed health. We know no sickness but that which carries us to our grave; we feel no vapours; we know no nerves. Go, ask the multitude of doctors—a curse which man's own luxurious habits have brought upon him—go, ask your doctors, whether a gipsy be not to be envied, for his exemption from the plagues that punish other men's effeminate habits.'

'True, Pharold!' replied his companion; 'but still, even the short time that you lived in other scenes, must have given your mind a taste for very different enjoyments from those that you can now find. You must have seen the beauty of law and order; you must have learned to delight in mental pleasures; you must long for the society of those of equal intellect and knowledge with yourself.'

'And do I not find them?' cried the gipsy, warming in defence of his race; 'to be sure I do. Think not that we have none among us as learned and as thoughtful as yourselves, though in another way. But you cannot understand us. You think that it is in our habits alone that we are different; but, remember, that when you speak to a true gipsy, who follows exactly the path of his fathers, you speak to one different in race, and creed, and mind, and feeling, and law, and philosophy, from you and yours. You think us all ignorant, and either bound as drudges to some low rejected trade, or plundering others, because we do not comprehend the excellence of laws. But, let me tell you again, that there are men amongst us deeply read in sciences which you know not; speaking well a language, for a hundred words of which your schools have laboured long years in vain. Have we not laws, too, of our own—laws better observed than your boasted codes? But you choose to doubt that we have them, because we put you beyond our code, as you put us beyond yours. When was ever justice shown to a gipsy? and, therefore, we look upon you as things to pillage. You speak, too, of the pleasures of the mind. Do you think my mind finds no exercise in scenes like this? I walk, hand in hand, with the seasons, through the world. Winter, your enemy, is my friend and companion. Gladly do I see him come, with his white mantle, through the bare woods and over the brown hills. I watch the budding forth of spring, too, and her light airs and changing skies, as I would the sports of a beloved child. I hail the majestic summer, as if the God of my own land had come to visit our race, even here; and in the yellow autumn, too, with the rich fruit and the fading leaf, I have a comrade full of calmer thoughts. The sunrise, and the sunset, and the midday, to me, are all eloquence. The storm, the stream, the clouds, the wind, for me have each a voice. I talk with the bright stars as they wander through the deep sky, and I listen to the sun and moon, as they sing along their lonely pilgrimage. Is not this enough? What need I more than nature?'

Perhaps his companion, whose mind was in no degree wanting in acuteness, might imagine that, in all the very enjoyments which the gipsy enumerated, as well as in the tone he used, were to be traced some remains of a better education than that of his race in general; and might believe that, had that education been continued, every pleasure that he felt would have been doubled by refinement. But all this came upon his mind as impression rather than as thought; —and the reader will please to observe that there is an immense difference between the two. The stranger apparently listened to, and took part in the gipsy's conversation about himself, while his inner soul was busy, most busy, with the other tidings which he had received. By the time that the enumeration of wild pleasures, afforded by a wandering life, was over, he had settled his plans in his own mind; and breaking off the subject there, demanded abruptly,—

'When, Pharold—tell me, when did you see him?'

He mentioned no name; and the gipsy, at once dropping the high and enthusiastic tone in which he had been speaking, answered, as to a common question, 'It was but to-day—not four hours ago, or you had not found me here.'

'And why not?' demanded the other. 'Whither would you go?'

'Far away,' answered the gipsy. I love not his neighbourhood; nor is it safe for me and mine. He thinks evil against us, and he will not be long ere he tries to bring his thoughts to pass.'

'But he cannot injure you,' replied the other; 'in all the things wherein you and he have borne a part, he has more cause to fear you than you have to fear him.'

'True!' said the gipsy, 'and yet I love not his neighbourhood. I may have done things in this land, in my youth, when passion and revenge were strong, and wisdom and forbear-

ance weak, that I should little like to have investigated in my middle age. Not that I fear for myself; for, from the dark leap that all men must take, I have never shrunk through life. But I fear the sorrow of those that would weep for me, and the unjust mingling of the innocent with the guilty, for which your laws are infamous.'

His companion mused for a moment; and then, laying his hand upon the arm of the gipsy, he replied, in a tone where kindness mingled with authority: 'Mark me, Pharold!' he said, 'you know that I am not one either to counsel you amiss, or to fall from you at a moment of need: base, indeed, should I be, were I to do so, after all you have done for me. But my resolutions are not yet fixed—my mind is not yet made up; and I must hear more, and examine deeply, ere I execute my half-formed purpose. Still you have no cause to fear; call upon me whenever you need me; and, in the meantime, if you please, you can remove from the spot where you now are, but not so far that I cannot find you, for you must help me to the end of all this.'

'To the common, at the back of Mrs. Falkland's woods?' asked the gipsy: 'they will hardly seek us there.'

'As good a spot as any,' replied his companion; 'and in case of necessity, Pharold, here, I have written down where you may always find me in this immediate neighbourhood; remembering, in the meantime, all that you have promised.'

'I have promised!' replied the gipsy; 'and you never knew me break my word. But what is this you give me with the paper? I want not gold—and from you, William.'

'But your people may,' replied the other; 'take it, take it, Pharold, it is never useless in such a life as yours.'

'I will take it,' answered the gipsy, 'because it may give me more control over my people; for although amongst our nation there are men whose minds you little dream of, yet these I have here are not, perhaps, of the best—not that they are evil either; but wild, and headstrong, and rash—as I was myself when I was young.'

They had already turned in their walk, and were now re-approaching the fire, round which the gipsies were gathered. Their conversation had not been without its share of interest to either, and each had much matter for reflection: so that—as thought is not that which makes a man speak, but that which keeps him silent—they advanced, without another word, to the spot where the stranger's horse stood, It was a fine powerful animal, of great bone and blood; but it was standing like a lamb, in the hands of a little boy, while the beautiful girl, whom we have mentioned as accosting the other travellers, now stood stroking his proud neck, and examining the accoutrements with a care that some people might have thought suspicious. As Pharold and his companion returned, however, she sprung away to the rest of her tribe, with a step as light as the moonshine on the sea.

'She is very beautiful,' said the stranger, whose eye had rested on her for a moment; 'who is she, Pharold?'

'She is my wife!' replied the gipsy abruptly.

His companion shook his head with a sigh, and putting his foot in the stirrup, mounted his horse, and rode away.

CHAPTER III.

THE FALKLAND FAMILY.

WHILE such events, as have just been described, were passing in the wood, the two travellers whom we first brought before the reader, and to whom we must now return, rode on; but begging leave to pass over all their farther journey, as it did not consist of more than half a mile, we may bring them safe to the gate of the very house, whose lights and shadows they had seen from the slope above the village.

By this time it was as dark as could well be desired. The sun was gone entirely; and the last fringe of his golden robe had swept the sky some time. The moon was not yet up, so that the stars had the sky all to themselves; but though they were shining as brightly as they did many a thousand years ago, when they were first seen glittering into the depths of space, they did very little to show the travellers their way.

Edward de Vaux had taken it into his head to go to the back entrance of his aunt's house. The truth is, he had worked himself up, as he came along, into a belief that there might be some fuss made upon his return; and had conjured up before his imagination every thing that might or could possibly occur, in which there was the least smack of ridicule,—although all the time he knew perfectly well that his companion was of too generous and feeling a disposition, even to dream that any thing was ridiculous which sprung from the heart. He well knew, also, that those he was about to meet were, by education, and habit, and natural character, the last persons in the world to do or say any thing that was not graceful and *biensèant*. But still, as his imagination was not the most tractable imagination in the world, but roved hither and thither, whether he liked it or not, on all occasions, he could not get the better of her in the present instance; and, therefore, in order that every thing in the way of reception might pass as quietly and as quickly as possible, he rode up to the gate of the back court, and after feeling about for the bell for some time, he rang for admittance.

After a little delay, a coachman with a powdered wig, and three rows of curls round his ears, opened the gates, with a lantern in his hand, and demanded what the strangers wanted; but without other reply, De Vaux

rode into the yard with his companion, and springing to the ground, exposed his well-known face to the glare of the lantern, and the wondering eyes of old Joseph, the immemorial coachman, who, bursting forth into a loud exclamation, called vehemently to the groom, and the helper, and the stable boy. 'The oaken doors returned a brazen sound!' and not only those that the old curly-wigged official of the hammer-cloth called to his aid, appeared with ready promptitude, but eke a footman emerged from the passage of the servants' hall, and two or three pippin-faced housemaids were seen 'peeping, from forth the alleys green,' beyond.

Thus, as usual, De Vaux's precaution in regard to not making a bustle had, in fact, the very contrary effect in the house itself. But this was not all; his method of proceeding had the very contrary effect with his companion, also, to that which he had purposed. Colonel Manners certainly did think, in the first instance, that such an entrance was a somewhat strange one for the house he saw before him; and when he found that it was, in truth, the stable-yard into which he had been taken, he thought the conduct of his friend still stranger. But, by this time, Charles Manners had known Edward de Vaux too long not to have some slight insight into his character, and into the weaknesses thereof; and as they had ridden along together upon that day's journey, various little traits, which might have escaped any but a very keen and a very friendly eye, had given him the key of his friend's feelings on his return; a key which he did not fail to apply on the present occasion. The result was, that he soon comprehended the general motives of De Vaux, though, perhaps, not all the little ins and outs of the business.

A slight smile curled Colonel Manners's lip, as he perceived what had been passing in his friend's mind; but he would not have had that smile seen, for any recompense that could have been offered to him, unless it had been that of curing his friend of a folly. But he knew very well that De Vaux was not a man to be laughed out of any thing on earth; and that, with all his sensibility to ridicule, it was only so long as the sneer was silent and suppressed, that he cared anything about it. The moment that the laugh was open, his pride took arms to defend the position which he occupied, and every one knows that pride would always rather blow up the place than capitulate.

'It is a great pity,' thought Colonel Manners, 'that De Vaux, who affects to, and perhaps really does, despise the opinion of the general fool, should thus, as it were, make himself a slave, to the laugh of his own fancy. I hope and trust, that his fair future bride may have influence enough to school him from these weaknesses.'

Such was all his comment; and by the time it was made, their horses were in safe hands, and a footman, as antique as the coachman, was leading the way up the back stairs towards the drawing-room.

De Vaux was somewhat uneasy at the back stairs, and at a distant prospect of the kitchen, and the servants' hall, and the housekeeper's room; but Manners, though he saw it all, appeared to see nothing, rubbed his boot with his riding-whip, and talked of North America with all the zeal and volubility of a Mohawk. His companion was relieved; and, following the fat legs and white stockings of the old footman up the narrow staircase, they were soon in a small lobby, which led into the drawing-room. Soft Turkey carpets covered the floor of the lobby; against each of the piers stood a small antique table of tortoise-shell and brass; and in the deep recesses of the windows were placed those immense and beautiful china jars, which formed the glory of our great grandmothers. These again were filled with a composition of all the sweet-scented leaves, gathered from the garden during the past year; and which, mingled with orris root and many a fragrant spice, diffused through the whole air a rich perfume of the eighteenth century.

But there was music upon the air of this bower as well as perfume. It was the music, however, of a sweet, low-toned woman's voice, speaking some sentences of which nothing could be distinguished but the melody. Nevertheless, it made the fitful colour come up for a moment in the cheek of Edward De Vaux; the next moment, the door was thrown open, and the visitors all silently and unannounced entered the room.

It was a large handsome chamber, fitted up as unlike a modern drawing-room as possible. There was nothing in it of the last fashion, even of that day; but all was comfortable, and all bespoke both taste and affluence. On the walls were a few cabinet pictures, which at first appeared dark and dingy, but which, when any one looked farther, turned out gems; and on the rich and massive marble mantel-piece—which was itself nearly equal in size, and quite equal in value, to a house in a modern square,—were placed pagodas, and feather fans, and screens, and many a little curiosity from different parts of the world,—bracelets that might have clasped the arm of Cleopatra, and idols that had been acquainted with Captain Cook. The room, like every clever room, had a great number of tables of all sorts and sizes; and at two of these tables, not with hospitable cares intent, but very busy with that sort of idleness which ladies call work, sat two fair dames, who, in point of age, might divide between them the apportioned years of man. The division of those seventy years, however, was very unequal, as the one nearest the door had monopolised at least forty-six of them to herself, and had left her daughter—for such was the other lady—not much more than twenty-three. They were both very handsome women, nevertheless; the mother feeling her years as light as a young king's crown, and

the daughter, in addition to a very beautiful person, and a face where all that is fine was softened by all that is pleasing—having the advantage of youth, and all youth's graces. There was one peculiarity in her countenance, which, as it had something to do with her mind, may as well be noticed. It was one of those faces which love not clouds—which smile where others frown; and as she sat with her eyes bent upon a provoking knot in her work, which for the last ten minutes had defied all her efforts to disentangle it, she was still half laughing at the perversity of the silk, which seemed to take a pleasure in baffling her.

There was a third person in the drawing-room, younger than either, and very different from both. As she lay upon a sofa at the other side of the room, with a book in her hand, and her eyes bent upon the pages, the light of the lamp falling at the same time from above upon her clear fair forehead, on her beautiful eyelids with their long dark eyelashes, and on the marble white chiseling of her nose and upper lip, she did not appear to be more than eighteen; but her real age, which we are bound to give, was twenty years, eleven months, and a few days, the exact number of which is forgotten. Her form was light and beautiful, and though those who did not love her might contend that she was certainly not equal to the Medicean Venus, yet she was a great deal more graceful that many another goddess, and as fair a specimen of the fairest of earth's creatures as the eye of man has ever seen since Eve's ill-fated experiment in Eden.

Her hair was of that glossy golden brown, which is so beautiful and so seldom seen; and as the whole party had given up the expectation of their visitors for that night, she had turned back the shining curls which would have fallen into her eyes while reading; so that, with a wavy line on either side, they left her fair forehead bare, and formed a bunch of ringlets behind each ear, that might have defied the chisel of a Chantry.

As the door which admitted De Vaux and his companion was that which led to the back staircase, the party in the drawing-room concluded, naturally enough, that it was opened by one of the domestics on some of the many motives or pretexts upon which a servant can visit the drawing-room. No one took any notice, no one looked up; and the fair girl upon the sofa went on commenting upon the book in her hand, without knowing that any one was listening to her gentle criticism.

Thus each of the two visitors had time to make their own observations, if they chose it. A bright pleased smile lighted up the rough features of Colonel Manners, as he was thus at once admitted, without the help of an Asmodeus, into the very heart of an English domestic circle, to each member of which he was a stranger. To him it was a sight full of pleasure and interest; it was a sight that he had seldom seen even when in England, and which he had not seen at all for several years while serving abroad; but it was one which fancy had often renewed for him in his solitary wanderings, which had been painted to his eye in the still night, and in the tented field on distant shores, which had been to him a dream, whereunto imagination could cling without the apprehension of disappointment; for he had ever thought of it as a thing whereof he might be the spectator, but never a sharer in its dearer ties.

As for Edward de Vaux, he *did not* choose to make any observations on the scene at all, for, more fastidious in anticipation than in reality, the moment he was in the midst of his domestic circle, a host of bright warm feelings rose up at once in his heart, and trampled every cold calculation of Chesterfieldism beneath their feet. Passing the old servant, who was himself amused to see the unconsciousness of the party in the drawing-room, De Vaux at once advanced towards the fair girl on the sofa. But there was a sound in his step different from that of any of the servants, which only let him pass half across the room, ere her eyes were raised from the book and fell upon him. The sight instantly called into them a gleam as bright as sunshine after a storm, and the warm, eloquent blood rose into her cheek and brow, while with a voice of unquestionable joy, she exclaimed, 'Edward! My dear aunt, here is Edward!'

The next moment, however, the light of her glance faded away, the blood ebbed back from her cheek, and from that moment it was scarcely perceivable that Edward de Vaux was anything more to her than an intimate friend. It was all the work of an instant, and Colonel Manners had only time to think, 'This is all very odd!' ere the other two ladies rose to welcome his companion and himself; while the one who had spoken, gracefully but composedly, drew her small foot from the sofa to the ground, and advanced to meet her lover; contriving to execute what is sometimes a difficult manœuvre, without showing half an inch of her ankle, though it might very well have borne the display.

The elder lady now of course took the lead, and expressed her joy at the return of her nephew, in a manner which showed how compatible real dignity and grace are with every zealous and kindly feeling. 'And this,' she said the next moment, 'is of course Colonel Manners; though you have not introduced him to me, Edward; but Colonel Manners indeed requires no introduction here; for allow me to say, my dear sir, that, even were it not that you had saved the life of my nephew, and rendered him so many inestimable services, the son of your mother, who was my dear and early friend, would always be the most welcome of guests at my fireside.'

Colonel Manners bowed, and replied, 'I have been lucky enough to find amongst my mother's papers, Madam, the letters of the Honourable Mrs. Falkland; and am aware how fortunate in a friend my parent was, during the greater

part of her short life. Most proud shall I be if the son may merit some portion of the same regard which you bestowed upon the mother.'

'You already command it, Colonel Manners,' she replied; 'Isadore—Marian—Colonel Manners! My daughter—my niece, Miss De Vaux.'

Now this introduction puzzled Colonel Manners a good deal, for reasons which may as well be explained. He had heard long before, while abroad, that his friend, Edward de Vaux, the only son of Lord Dewry, was affianced to his cousin, and that their marriage was to take place as soon as the young heir of the barony could return to his native country, provided that the lady were by that time of age. In the course of their intimacy in other lands, De Vaux had often spoken of his fair cousin Marian, and had indeed on their return besought Colonel Manners to accompany him down to the house of his aunt, in order to act the part of bridesman at his wedding, which was to take place immediately. With this request we have seen that he complied; but he had completely made up his mind to the belief that his friend was about to be united to the daughter of Mrs. Falkland, and he was now surprised to find a Miss De Vaux, towards whom the manner of Edward de Vaux was not exactly that which men assume towards their sisters. Besides, her name was Marian, that of his promised bride; and although this discovery, leaping over the head of all his own preconceptions, puzzled Colonel Manners for a moment, he soon set it all to rights in his own mind, by supposing, what was in fact the truth, that the fair girl we have described was the daughter of Lord Dewry's brother.

All the while he was settling this to his own satisfaction, he was going through the manual of politeness, and doing De Vaux the favour of talking to Mrs. Falkland and her daughter, while the lover spoke in a lower tone to the other fair cousin. Whatever he said, however, seemed to have no very great effect upon her. She smiled and seemed to answer him kindly and affectionately; but she displayed no further sign of that agitation which a girl in her situation might be expected to feel, on the return of her lover from a long and dangerous expedition. Once indeed she laid her hand upon the table near her, and Colonel Manners saw that, notwithstanding the general composure which she seemed to feel, that hand trembled so much, that, as if conscious its tremor might be perceived, she instantly withdrew it, and suffered her arm to fall gracefully by her side.

After standing booted and spurred in the middle of the room for about ten minutes, and having learned that their servants had arrived with their baggage early in the morning of the same day, the two gentlemen retired to cast off their travelling costume, and attire themselves in apparel more suited to the drawing-room. Colonel Manners proceeded to the task systematically; and, although he knew that nothing on earth could ever make him handsome, yet he took every reasonable pains with his dress, and was soon ready to descend again, with that neat, clean, soldier-like appearance for which he was particularly distinguished. De Vaux acted differently, as may well be supposed, and giving his man the keys of the trunk mails, he cast himself on a chair; and, with his arm leaning on the dressing-table, remained for full ten minutes in deep and somewhat melancholy thought, while the servant continued to torment him, every other minute, with 'Sir, do you want this?' or, 'Sir, shall I do that?'

Into his private thoughts we shall not at present pry, although we consider that we have a right to do so whenever the necessities of the tale may demand it; but in this instance it is only requisite to give the ending reflection of his reverie, which may serve as a key to all the rest. 'How cold Manners must have thought her reception of me! and yet her own lips, which never from her infancy spoke anything but truth, have given me the assurance of her love. Well, we cannot change people's nature! and yet she was very different as a child!'

Such were the last dying words of his meditation; and then, starting up, he proceeded hastily to dress himself, addressing the servant with as much impatience as if the man had been dreaming instead of himself. 'There, give me that coat,' he exclaimed. 'Set down the dressing-case here. Put those shoes on the other side of the table; and throw the stockings over the back of the chair. How slow you are, William! Here now, pull off these great boots, and then go and see that old Joseph does not poison the horses with any of his nostrums.' These various commands the man obeyed with as much promptitude as possible; and after he was gone, De Vaux proceeded to dress himself with all the haste of one who is afraid of being detected in loitering away his time. He was half way through the operation, and was just arranging his hair, when Manners, whose rooms were on the opposite side of the corridor, rejoined him; and they descended together, without having made any comment on the subject which was certainly next to the heart of Edward de Vaux.

In the meanwhile, the ladies in the drawing-room had not, of course, refrained from comment on the appearance and arrival of their visitors. As the first object of all their affections was Edward de Vaux, his appearance and health naturally occupied several moments ere anything else was thought of.

'How very well he looks!' said Mrs. Falkland; 'his health seems greatly improved.'

'I never saw him look so handsome,' said Isadore Falkland, 'though he was wrapped in that horrid great-coat.'

Marian de Vaux said nothing, but she repaid her cousin for her praises of her lover's looks by a smile as bright as an angel's, which fluttered away in a warm blush, though it had nearly been drowned in some sparkling drops

that rose into her eyes. So she turned away, and began playing with the seals on the writing-table.

'I am delighted that Edward has prevailed on Colonel Manners to come down with him,' said Mrs. Falkland; 'for I have longed to see him, on his mother's account.'

'And I, because he saved Edward's life,' said Marian de Vaux.

'And I am delighted too,' said Isadore Falkland, 'because he seems a very agreeable, gentlemanly man, though certainly a very ugly one—I think, as ugly a man as I ever saw.'

'His face is certainly not handsome,' replied her mother; 'but his figure seems remarkably fine. His mother was as beautiful a woman as ever lived; and I have heard that, till he was twenty, he was equally good looking.'

'Poor fellow!' cried Isadore; 'he has been very unfortunate, then; for it is certainly better to be born ugly than to become so afterwards.'

'I did not think him ugly at all,' said Marian de Vaux.

'That was because you only saw the man that saved Edward's life,' replied Isadore, laughing; 'but he is not beautiful, I can assure you, Marian.'

'Happy are they, my dear Isadore,' replied her mother, 'who can "see Othello's visage in his mind;" and I do not think you, my dear girl, are one, either, to value any one for their personal appearance.'

'No, no, no, mamma! I am not,' answered Miss Falkland; 'but still, some sensible old gentleman has said that a good countenance is the best letter of recommendation; and now, had it not been that you had known Colonel Manners's mother, or that he had saved Edward's life——Yet, notwithstanding——,' she added, breaking off her sentence abruptly, 'after all, perhaps, his face is just the one from which we should expect a man to save people's lives, and do a great many brave and noble things.'

'I think so, certainly,' answered Mrs. Falkland. 'However ugly it may be, I have seldom seen a face through which a fine mind shone out so distinctly.'

Such was the tenor of the conversation that went on in the drawing-room, till the two gentlemen returned, and, by their presence, took themselves out of the range of topics. Other subjects were soon started, and filled the hours till supper-time. Edward de Vaux naturally took the place he loved best; and what passed between him and his fair cousin was not always loud enough in its tone, or general enough in its nature, to be very distinct to the rest of the party, or very interesting to the reader. Manners, who knew as well as any one how to effect a diversion in favour of a friend, placed himself near the other ladies, and displayed such stores of varied information as well occupied their attention. Those stores were somewhat desultory, perhaps, but they were gained from every source. His memory, too, was excellent, and stored with a number of little anecdotes and beautiful scraps of poetry; and, without ever seeming to intrude them, he knew how to mingle them in the general current of what was passing, with tact almost as skilful as that of the greatest writer and most amiable man that centuries have witnessed upon earth—Sir Walter Scott.

So extensive, indeed, seemed to have been the reading of their new acquaintance, that Mrs. Falkland wondered thereat in silence; while Isadore, well knowing that there is scarcely any question on the face of the earth that a young and pretty woman may not ask of a man under forty with perfect *bienséance* and propriety, looked up with a smile, and said—'Pray tell me, Colonel Manners, where you have found time, while you have been defeating the King's enemies night and day, to read every thing of every kind that is worth reading?'

'Oh, madam,' he replied, 'I am afraid I have read but little as compared with what I might have done. A soldier's life is the most favourable of all others for general reading; though, perhaps, not for pursuing steadily any particular study. He is for a few days full of active employment, and then for many more has hardly anything to do; and if he gives one half of his spare time to reading, he will, I believe, read more than many a philosopher. The only difficulty is in procuring books that are worth the trouble of poring over.'

In such conversation passed the hours till supper, for those were days of supper,—that most pleasant and sociable of all ways of acquiring the nightmare. When the meal was announced, it of course caused some derangement in the local position of the parties; and Edward de Vaux being brought for a moment nearer to his aunt than his other occupations had hitherto permitted, she took the opportunity of saying, 'I hope, Edward, your father will not be at all offended at your coming here first. He is sometimes a little *ombrageux*, you know; and I would advise you to ride over to-morrow as early as possible.'

'Oh! no fear of his being offended, my dear aunt,' he replied. 'In the first place, he wrote to give me that assurance. In the next place, as we chose to ride our own two best horses down, rather than trust them to two break-neck grooms, we could not have gone seventeen miles farther to-night: and, in the last place,' he added, in a lower tone, 'you know that my father never likes visitors to take him by surprise; and as the invitation to Manners was yours, not his, of course I could not have brought him to the Hall without writing, which I had no time to do. There is nothing he hates so much as any one taking him by surprise.'

Almost as he spoke, the old servant, Peter, who had retired after announcing supper, once more threw the door open with a portentous swing, and proclaimed, in a loud voice, 'Lord

Dewry!' Something like a smile glanced upon Mrs. Falkland's lip, as the sudden and unexpected arrival of her brother contrasted somewhat strangely with what her nephew had just been saying. She paused in her progress to the supper room, however; and, in a moment after, with a slow step, which was languid without being feeble, Lord Dewry entered the ante-room, and came forward towards them.

While he is in the act of doing so, let us paint him to the reader—at least, as far as the outward man is concerned. Of the inward man more must be said hereafter. He was tall—perhaps six feet high, or very near it—and well made, though now excessively thin. His frame was broad, and had been very powerful; his shoulders wide, his chest expansive, and his waist remarkably small. In feature, too, it could be still discerned that he had once been a very handsome man; but his face was now thin and sharp, and his complexion extremely sallow. His eyes, however, were still fine, and his teeth of a dazzling whiteness. He might have numbered sixty years, but he looked somewhat older, although he had taken a good deal of pains with his dress, and lay under considerable obligations to his valet-de-chambre. The first impression produced on the mind of a stranger by the appearance of Lord Dewry was imposing, but not pleasing; and, unfortunately, the unpleasant effect did not wear off. He looked very much the Peer and the man of consequence; but there was a gloomy cloud upon his brow which was not melancholy, and a curl of the lip which was not a smile, and both prepared the mind of all who approached him, for not the most agreeable man in the world. His general expression, too, was cold. He had a look like the easterly wind, at once chilling and piercing; and, though report said that he had been a very fascinating man in his youth, and had not always made the best use of his powers of pleasing, he did not seem at present to consider it at all necessary to use any effort to render himself agreeable, farther than the common forms of society and what was due to his own station, required.

'Well, my Lord,' said Mrs. Falkland, as he came forward, 'I am happy to see you come to welcome our wanderer back again.'

As she spoke, Edward advanced to his father, who grasped his hand eagerly, while a smile of unfeigned pleasure, for a single instant, spread a finer expression over the worn features of the Baron. 'Welcome back, Edward!' he said; 'welcome back! you look remarkably well! I have to apologise, Maria,' he added, turning to his sister after this brief salutation bestowed upon his son; 'I have to apologise for coming thus, without notice; but I have some business to-morrow, down at the park house, of which I knew nothing till this morning; and I also wished to see Edward, whose devoirs here'—and he turned towards Marian — 'I knew must first be paid, according to all the rules of gallantry. How are you, my fair niece? You look a little pale. How are you, Isadore? And the Peer, without waiting to hear how any one was, cast his eyes upon the ground, and fixing upon a spot in the carpet, seemed calculating geometrically the precise measurement of all its strange angles.

'We were just going to supper,' said Mrs. Falkland; 'will you come with us? But first let me introduce you to Colonel Manners.' Lord Dewry acknowledged the introduction by a cold bow, while Manners said some words of course; and the question of supper being renewed, the nobleman agreed to go down with the party to the table, though he bestowed a word or two of heavy censure on the meal they were about to take.

'It is, nevertheless,' said Colonel Manners, 'from its very hour, the most sociable one of the whole day; for by this time, in general, all the cares, and annoyances, and labours of the busy daylight are over; and, as is justly observed—I forget where — nothing remains for us but enjoyment and repose.'

'Eating and sleep!' muttered Lord Dewry; 'the delights of a hog and a squirrel;' but as what he said did not seem intended to be heard, Colonel Manners made no reply, though he did hear it; and the party seated themselves round the supper table, in walking towards which these few sentences had passed. For some time the presence of the Peer seemed destined to cast a gloom over the society in which he had so suddenly appeared. His manner even here, in the midst of his nearest relations, and by the side of his newly returned son, was cold, stern, and gloomy, only broken by some flash of cynical scorn for things that other people valued, or by some biting sneer at the follies and weaknesses of his fellow creatures.

To his niece, Marian de Vaux, however, his conduct was very different. At table he placed himself by her side; made an evident effort to render himself agreeable to her; and whenever he spoke to her, softened his tone, and endeavoured to call up a smile. Such was his conduct on the present evening; but it may be necessary also to stretch our view over the past, for his behaviour to his niece had always formed a strange contrast to his conduct towards others. The first effect of her presence, when he had not seen her for some time was almost always to throw him into a fit of deep gloom; and those who watched him narrowly might have remarked his lip move, as if he were speaking to himself, though no sound was heard. From this fit of abstraction he generally roused himself soon, but it was evidently at the cost of great efforts; and then he would speak to his niece with a degree of tenderness which bordered on timidity, and treat her with attention approaching to gallantry. Nevertheless, even across the moments when he seemed exerting himself to please her, would break occasionally the same fits of gloom, called up by words apparently the least calculated to produce any such effect, They were then always brief, how-

ever; and it seemed that the original exertion to conquer the dark feelings which the first sight of his niece appeared to arouse, was sufficient to hold all the rest in check.

It was only to her, however, that he was thus gentle. Her presence made no difference in his conduct towards others; and, the moment his attention or his speech was called from the conversation with his niece, he seemed to become a different being—dark, stern, and overbearing.

Such a demeanour, of course, was not calculated to promote any thing like cheerful conversation; and the atmosphere of his gloom would have affected all those by whom he was surrounded, and extinguished every thing like pleasure for that night, had it not been for the counteracting influence of Colonel Manners. He, without the slightest touch of obtrusiveness or self-conceit, by a just estimation of himself and others, was always in possession of his own powers of mind; and never suffered the presence of any other individual—unless, indeed, it was that of one whom he could at once admire and love—to give a tone to his behaviour, to restrain him in what he chose to say or to frighten him from what he chose to do.

Isadore Falkland, as soon as she found that powerful support was prepared for her, boldly resisted the influence of her uncle's presence also. Mrs. Falkland, whose naturally strong mind was not unfitted to cope with her brother, held on the even tenor of her way; and Edward de Vaux joining in, the conversation soon became once more general and cheerful. It had taken another turn, however; and the subject had become the mutual adventures of Colonel Manners and Edward de Vaux, in the war which was then raging between France and England, in North America. Many was the wild enterprise, many the curious particular that they had to speak of; 'hair's breadth escapes, and perils imminent'—scenes and persons quite fresh and strange to Europeans; a new world, and all that a new world contained, with a system of warfare totally different from anything that had ever been seen on the older continents. At that time neither a barbarous policy, nor a criminal negligence, had produced any of those lamentable results which are rapidly exterminating the Indian nations of America: but, at the same time, a most barbarous policy had—instead of endeavouring to civilise and soften the dusky natives of the woods, the real lords of the land — engaged them, with all their fierce and horrid modes of warfare, in the contention between the two great bands of European robbers, who were struggling for the country that really belonged to the savage. Of these Indian nations, and of their wild habits, both Manners and De Vaux spoke at large; and many a strange scene had they witnessed together, amongst the uncultivated woods and untamed people of the transatlantic world.

Often, too, Manners, with kind and friendly zeal, would make Edward de Vaux the hero of his tale; and while he related—as if he were speaking of ordinary events — some gallant exploit or some noble action, would suffer his eye to glance for a single instant, unperceived, to the countenance of Marian de Vaux. It was generally calm and tranquil; beautiful, but still; yet occasionally, when the moment of danger or of interest came, and when Edward extricated himself gallantly from some difficult or dangerous situation, there was a bright light beamed up in her eyes, a long-drawn breath, and a flickering colour, which satisfied Manners that all was well.

Nevertheless, Manners could not, of course, speak of his friend's adventures, without a little delicate manœuvring, in order to make the tale appear more a general than a personal one; nor could he continue the subject long. Often, therefore, he returned to the Indians, and often to the state of America in general, while Mrs. Falkland and her daughter gave him, by manifold questions and observations, full opportunity of varying the subject *ad libitum*. They sought to know, amongst other facts, what link of connection could possibly have sprung up between the Indians and the Europeans, so strong as to make the savage nations have any feeling of regard or interest towards either of the countries which only struggled to monopolise the means of plundering and destroying them.

'Oh, you must not think, my dear madam,' answered Colonel Manners, 'that all persons who visit America are actuated by one selfish motive, or pursue one system of fraud and oppression towards the Indians. On the contrary, there are many who go over there with the philanthropic motive of civilizing and benefiting the savage tribes themselves, and who, in the endeavour to effect this object, display a degree of wisdom, perseverance, judgment, and courage, that is quite astonishing. Nor are these qualities without the most immense effect upon the wild aborigines of the land, who look up to such men almost as they would to a god. De Vaux and I know a very remarkable instance of the kind, in one of the most noble spirited and excellent of human beings, to whom we are both under no small obligations. He nursed me through a long and severe fever, when my senses were quite gone; and afterwards enabled me, by his influence with the Indians, to render your nephew some small service—which, however, was entirely attributable to his exertions.

'Nay, nay, Manners,' replied De Vaux; 'to yours as much as his, and more; for had you not ventured, at the head of a party of Indians, two hundred miles into a hostile country, not a step of which you knew——'

'Well, well, De Vaux,' answered his friend, 'you must own that he went with me, though he did not know you, and I did. You must not take away from the merit of my hero, for such I intend to make him in these ladies' eyes. I know not, however, how you will like a hero of sixty, Miss Falkland; but such, I must confess, he is at least. He has now lived, for many years, upon the very borders of civilisation, or

rather beyond it, for his house is surrounded by forests and Indian wigwams. He has never taken any part in the contentions of the tribes, and seems equally venerated by all, showering good and blessing upon the heads of every one who approaches him. He is deeply versed in the laws and the manners of the natives, too; and, though a finished and elegant scholar and gentleman, conforms, when necessary, to their usages, in a manner that is at once amusing and admirable. He is, at the same time, the most skilful and indefatigable hunter that the world, perhaps, ever produced—an accomplishment which renders him still more venerable in the eyes of the Indians, who, on account of all these qualities, have named him, 'The White Father.'

'Delightful creature!' exclaimed Miss Falkland, with her beautiful eyes sparkling like diamonds; 'but tell me, Colonel Manners, tell me, what is he like? Mamma, if you have no objection, I will go out, and marry him.'

'None in the world, my love!' answered Mrs. Falkland; 'but perhaps it may be better, first, to send over and ask whether he will marry you.'

'That he will of course,' answered she: 'but, Colonel Manners, you have not told me what he is like—in person I mean.'

'Oh, he is as fresh and hale as a life of exercise and a heart at rest can make him,' replied Manners. 'Indeed, he is as handsome a man as ever I saw.'

'Oh, that will do exactly!' cried Miss Falkland, laughing. Colonel Manners smiled too; but there was a tinge of melancholy in his smile; for, however much he might have made up his mind to the fact, that personal beauty is an indispensable requisite to obtain woman's love, yet every little trait which served to confirm that opinion touched a gloomy chord in his bosom, which again called forth the tone of many a harmonising feeling, and made somewhat sad music within.

'And pray, Colonel Manners,' said Lord Dewry, with the cold, if not supercilious, tone which he generally employed, 'what may be the name of the wonderful person who does all these wonderful things?'

'The name, my Lord,' replied Colonel Manners, coolly—'the name of the gentleman who went two hundred miles into the Indian country to save your son, Captain de Vaux, from the tomahawk, without ever having seen him, is one known throughout the greater part of America,—Sir William Ryder.'

Lord Dewry turned suddenly still paler than he was before; and then as red as fire. Whether it was that some feelings had been excited by that name, with which he did not choose to trust his lips, or whether his emotion proceeded from temporary illness, did not appear; but he replied nothing; and Colonel Manners, by whom the Peer's agitation had not been totally unmarked, went on. 'If I remember right,' he said, 'I heard Sir William Ryder ask after your Lordship's health from De Vaux, and say that he had known you many years ago, in England.'

'I once knew, sir,' replied Lord Dewry, drawing himself up, 'I once knew an unworthy blackguard of that name, who is now, I believe, in America; but he has no right to claim acquaintance with me.'

De Vaux looked at his father with astonishment, and then turned his eyes towards Manners, as if to pray him patience; but his friend was perfectly calm, and replied,—'Your Lordship must allude to some different person, as the description does not at all correspond with him of whom I speak.'

'No, no, sir,' answered the Baron, reddening, 'I speak of the same person,—there can be no doubt of it,—a gambling beggar!——

'If you do speak of the same person, Lord Dewry,' replied Colonel Manners, quite calmly, 'I must beg of you to remember, that you speak of my friend; and in the presence of one who does not like to hear his friend's character assailed.'

'Indeed, sir, indeed!' exclaimed Lord Dewry, rising; 'do you kindly wish to dictate to me, in my sister's house, what I am to say of a person who, it seems, has formed an unfortunate intimacy with my own son; and is, as I said, a gambling beggar?'

Manners paused a moment. He and De Vaux were alike under deep obligations to the man of whom Lord Dewry spoke; and he felt that the language used by the Peer was not only a gross personal insult to both of them, but especially to himself, who had been the means of introducing him to his companion, and who had the moment before bestowed such high and unqualified praise on the very person whom he now heard reviled. He remembered Lord Dewry's age and situation, however, and his own particular position, and endeavoured to moderate his reply as much as possible; though to pass the matter over in silence, or to leave the charges of the Peer without direct contradiction, he felt to be impossible, as an officer, a man of honour, or the friend of Sir William Ryder.

'Your personal opinion, my Lord,' he answered, 'you may, of course, express to your own son, or your own family, whenever you like, provided it be not injurious to any friend of mine. In which last case I shall, as before, beg your Lordship to refrain in my presence, for I am not a man to hear a friend calumniated in silence.'

'Calumniated sir! calumniated?' exclaimed Lord Dewry.

'Yes, sir, such was the word I made use of,' replied Colonel Manners, 'because the expressions you applied to Sir William Ryder were calumnious, if applied to my friend, whom a long life of noble actions raises above suspicion; but I trust and believe we are speaking of different persons.'

''Tis well, sir; 'tis very well!' replied Lord

Dewry, appearing to grow somewhat cooler: 'tis extremely well!—I trust it is as you say.—Give me a glass of soda water. Maria, I shall now retire to rest; I am somewhat fatigued; my apartments are, I think, opposite the drawing room. Good night!—Colonel Manners, I wish you good night!' And, bowing with low and bitter courtesy, he left the room.

Colonel Manners, whatever might be his feelings, and whatever might be his intentions, took no notice of what had passed, after Lord Dewry left the room, although he could not but feel that he had been insulted by a man whose age protected him; but both Mrs. Falkland and De Vaux spoke upon the subject after a moment's painful pause. The first apologised with dignified mildness for the occurrence, and assuring her visitor that something strange and extraordinary must have irritated her brother during the course of the day, or that he would not so far have forgot his usual *bienséance;* and the latter pressed his friend with kindly earnestness to forget what had occurred, and not to suffer it to affect his conduct, or abridge his stay.

Colonel Manners smiled, and suffered himself to be overcome: 'You know, De Vaux, that I am not one to be driven from my position by the first fire,' he said; 'and as I suppose that Lord Dewry and myself will not meet very frequently after the present time, we shall have but few opportunities of being as agreeable to each other as we have been to-night.'

Thus ended the conversation, and soon after the party separated, each grieving not a little that the harmony of the evening had been so unfortunately interrupted, when there was no reason to expect such an event.

CHAPTER IV.

A SINGULAR QUARREL.

THE mind of man is a curious thing, in some respects not at all unlike an old Gothic castle, full of turnings and windings, long dark passages, spiral staircases, and secret corners. Amongst all these architectural involutions, too, the ideas go wandering about, generally very much at random, often get astray, often go into a wrong room and fancy it their own; and often, too, it happens that, when one of them is tripping along quite quietly, thinking that all is right, open flies a door; out comes another, and turns the first back again—sometimes rudely, blowing her candle out, and leaving her in the dark—and sometimes, taking her delicately by the tips of the fingers, and leading her to the very spot whence she set out at first.

Colonel Manners, retiring to his bedchamber, though he seldom, if ever indulged in reveries, of happiness which were never to be realised, could not help sitting down to think over the events of the evening, and the circle to which he had been introduced. In the first place, he took great care to turn the idea of Lord Dewry, and his rudeness, out of the castle, being a great economiser of pleasant thoughts; and then, with somewhat of a sigh (the sort of semi-singultus which people give to some thing irremediable in their own fate, while contemplating the state of another), he thought, 'De Vaux is a very happy man, and yet,' he continued, 'though she is very beautiful, too, and evidently has deeper feelings beneath that calm exterior, yet, had I had to choose between the two cousins, I would have fixed upon the other.' As he thus went on thinking, Colonel Manners began to remember that his thoughts might be treading upon dangerous ground. And as sleep is a strong fortress against the attack of dangerous thoughts, he resolved to take a refuge there; going to bed, he was soon within the gates of slumber. But fancy turned traitor within his fortress, and, ere long, whole troops of dreams poured in, laying his heart prostrate before imaginations which he had repelled with veteran courage for more than fourteen years. There was, of course, no resisting under such circumstances: the garrison threw down their arms, and he went on dreaming of love and domestic happiness all night. It did him no harm, however, for one of the most curious phenomena which take place in regard to those wild visitants, dreams, occurred in this case. The visions that had come to him had all been as vivid as reality: he had felt more and more acutely than he had, perhaps, ever felt in life; there had been pleasures and pains, intense and varying; events and feelings which, had they occurred in waking existence, he would have remembered till the last hour of his life; and yet, when he woke, he had forgot the whole. It was as if some after-sleep, with a spunge dipped in Lethe, had passed by, and wiped out from the tablet of memory all but a few rough scratches, sufficient to show that dreams had been there.

The day was yet young when he woke; but Manners was habitually an early riser—a habit that generally springs from two causes—vigorous health, a frame without languor, and easily refreshed; or from a refined heart, at ease within itself. When he had prayed—for all noble-minded beings pray; and the only truly great pride is the pride with which one owns oneself the servant of God: it is the soldier pointing to the colours under which he serves;—when he had prayed, he dressed himself somewhat slowly, gazing from time to time out of the window, over the rich landscape sparkling with dew and morning; and then, opening his door, went out with the purpose of breathing the fresh air of the early day. The windows at either end of the corridor were still closed, for it had scarcely struck six, but the skylight over the staircase gave light enough; and Colonel Manners, descending, found a housemaid, with unbought roses on her cheeks, and blue arms, busily washing the marble hall, and the steps

that went out into the garden, which, stretching away to the south-west, was separated from the park in which the house stood, by a haw-haw and a light fence.

The garden into which Colonel Manners now went forth was an old-fashioned one, with manifold beds, arranged in as many mathematical figures. Each bed, fringed with its close-cut green border of box, was full of as many flowers as it would hold and as the season afforded; and though of late many a foreign land has been ransacked to procure new exotics for our grounds, yet even then the garden was not without its rich assortment of flowering shrubs; some still bearing the blossom, some fallen into the fruit. Between the beds—and, as the garden was of very great extent, the beds were not very close together—were spaces of soft green turf; sometimes flanked with holly, or hedged with yew, so as to make a sort of little bowling-green; sometimes wide open to the gay sunshine, and full of innumerable thrushes and blackbirds, hopping along, with their fine shanks sunk amidst the blades of grass. Here and there, too, was an arbour, covered with clematis; and hot-houses and green-houses, now and then, peeped out from behind the shrubberies, on the sunny side of the garden.

Colonel Manners took his way along a walk that flanked the inclosure to the east, and which, running by the side of the haw-haw, a little elevated above the park and surrounding country, gave on the one side, an extensive prospect over a rich and smiling landscape, with the deer bounding over the grass, and the cattle lowing along the distant upland; and, on the other, showed the garden—somewhat formal, perhaps but neat, and beautiful, and sparkling. He was a soldier, and a man of the world, and he loved books, and he did not dislike society; but, perhaps, there never was a man upon earth who more thoroughly enjoyed a solitary morning walk amidst flowers and beautiful scenery. Colonel Manners, therefore, was not very well pleased when, after following the walk which he had chosen to the end, he heard footsteps beyond the bushes, round which the path now swept.

Had these footsteps, indeed, possessed that light peculiar sound, which is produced by a small and pretty foot, Colonel Manners, who never objected to see the beautiful things of nature enhanced by the presence of the most beautiful, might not have thought his reveries unworthily disturbed. In the present instance, however, the sound was very different; it was the dull, heavy, determined step of a foot that takes a firm hold of the ground; and, as he went on, he was not surprised to meet with Lord Dewry at the turning of the walk.

Colonel Manners, if he had not forgot all about their discussion of the preceding evening, had remembered it as little as possible; and, being one of those happy men who never suffer any annoyance of such a nature to rankle at the heart, he had settled the matter in his own mind by thinking that the old gentleman had the toothache, or some of those corporeal pangs or infirmities which cause and excuse ill-temper, and sometimes even rudeness, at that period of life when the passing away of those mighty blessings, vigour and health, is, in itself, matter enough for irritation. As, however, he never liked to subject himself to occasions for commanding his temper, he proposed, in the present instance, merely to give the Peer 'good morning,' and pass on upon his walk.

This purpose he was not permitted to execute; as no sooner did Lord Dewry come opposite to him than he stopped abruptly, and answered Colonel Manners's salutation by a cold and haughty bow. 'Colonel Manners,' he said, 'I saw you come into the garden from the windows of my room, and I have done myself the honour of seeking you.'

The Peer spoke slowly and calmly; but Manners, who doubted not that his intention was to apologise, was both somewhat surprised that so proud a man should do so at all, and likewise somewhat puzzled by a sneering curl of the nostril, and a slight twinkling of the eyelid, which seemed to betray a spirit not quite so tranquil as his tone would have indicated:—'Your Lordship does me honour,' he replied; 'what are your commands?'

'Simply as follows, Colonel Manners,' replied Lord Dewry.—'I think you last night made use of the term *calumny*, as applied to part of my discourse; and, as I am not in the habit of being insulted without taking measures to redress myself, I have followed you hither for the purpose of arranging the necessary result.'

Colonel Manners felt inclined to smile, but he refrained, and replied seriously, 'My Lord, I wish to heaven you would forget this business. You thought to apply the strongest terms of injury to a gentleman for whom I had expressed my friendship and gratitude; and I pronounced such terms to be calumnious, in regard to my friend, but expressed, at the same time, my belief that we were speaking of different persons. For heaven's sake, let the matter rest where it does; I meant no personal insult to you: I trust you meant none to me. I came down here the friend of your son, on a joyful occasion, and it would pain me not a little to go away the enemy of his father.'

The lip of Lord Dewry curled with a bitter and galling sneer. 'Colonel Manners,' he said. 'I believe that you wear a sword!'

'I do, sir,' replied Manners, reddening; 'but I should be unworthy to wear one did I draw it against a man old enough to be my father.'

Lord Dewry, too, reddened. 'If, as I perceive, sir,' he said, 'you intend to make my age your protection, I trust you have calculated the consequences to your reputation, and will understand the light in which I view you. When I am willing, sir, to wave all respect of age, I do not see what you have to do with it,'

'Much, my Lord,' answered Colonel Manners; 'much have my own conscience and my own honour to do with it.'

'Do not let an officer who is refusing to fight talk of honour, sir,' replied Lord Dewry.

'You cannot provoke me to forget myself, Lord Dewry,' answered the other; I hold all duelling in abhorrence, and as anything but a proof of courage; but when the encounter is to be between a young and active man and one of your Lordship's age and probable habits it is murder outright. Your Lordship will excuse me for saying that I think the business a very foolish one, and that I must insist upon its being dropped.'

'I shall drop it, as far as regards the endeavour to make a man fight who is not disposed to do so,' replied Lord Dewry, with angry and disappointed, rather than a contemptuous, smile, for which he intended it to be; 'but, as a matter of course, I shall make generally known the fact, that you have refused to draw your sword when called upon.'

Colonel Manners laughed. 'My Lord,' he answered, 'I have drawn it in eleven different battles in his Majesty's service; I have been wounded nine times, and I am quite satisfied with a certain degree of reputation obtained in these affairs, without seeking to increase it by the encounter to which your Lordship would provoke me.'

Lord Dewry stood and gazed at him for a moment or two with a heavy lowering brow, as if contemplating how he might lash his adversary to the course he sought to bring him to pursue; but the calm and confident courage and cool determination of Colonel Manners foiled him even in his own thoughts; and, after glaring at him thus while one might count twenty, he exclaimed, 'You shall repent it, sir! you shall repent it!'

'I do not think it, my Lord,' replied Manners: 'I wish you good morning,' and he turned calmly on his heel, retreading, with slow steps, the path he had followed from the house.

In the meantime, the pace of Lord Dewry was much more rapid; but for a moment we must pause ourselves, and seize this opportunity of looking into his bosom, and seeing some of the motives which, like Cyclopes in the cave of the Vulcan, were busy forging all those hot thunderbolts that he was dealing about so liberally :—*some*, we only say some; for were we to look at all, we should have a catalogue too long for recapitulation here. The fact then, was, that Lord Dewry had been greatly irritated on the previous day by a conversation of not the most pleasant kind, concerning the very Sir William Ryder of whom he was destined to hear such high praises the moment he set his foot within his sister's doors. Now, for various reasons, unto himself best known, he hated this Sir William Ryder with a most reverent and solicitous hatred, and would willingly have given a thousand pounds to any one who would have brought him proof positive that he was dead and safely deposited in that earthy chancery, the archives of which, though they contain many a treasured secret, can never meet the searching eye of this inquisitive world. What, then, were his feelings when he heard that this very man, in regard to whom his darkest passions had been stirred up that very day, and towards whom he had nourished an evergreen animosity for many years—when he heard that, through the instrumentality of Colonel Manners, this man had been made intimate with his only son.

This then was Manners's offence; but had it been likely to end there, Lord Dewry might even have forgiven it. Such, however, was not the case; Lord Dewry had some reason to believe that the object of his hatred might visit England; and imagination instantly set up before him the picture of his son, Colonel Manners, and Sir William Ryder meeting and discussing many things that would be better let alone. Now, he trusted and believed that, as far as his ancient enemy was concerned, he could manage his son, and cause him to break off a connection which had not been of long duration; but, at the same time, he judged it necessary to place a barrier between him and Colonel Manners himself, so as to cut off every link of communication between Edward de Vaux and Sir William Ryder; and, for this purpose, he at once determined to quarrel with his son's friend; which, in his own irritable and irritated state of mind, he found it not at all difficult to accomplish. On the preceding night he had begun, therefore, with real good will; and, as he was a man totally devoid of any thing like personal fear, and remembered that he had once been a remarkably good swordsman, while he forgot that he was sixty, he was really well pleased when Manners made use of a term which promised to give him an opportunity of bringing their dispute to such an issue as must absolutely put an end to the intimacy between his son and Colonel Manners for ever. 'Even should I receive a wound,' he thought, 'so much the better;' and, strange as it is to say, had Lord Dewry even contemplated being killed in the encounter he sought, he would have looked upon it with less apprehension, than might be supposed, when there unto was attached the certainty of his son being separated for ever from Charles Manners and from Sir William Ryder; so much less terrible does it often appear to our contradictory nature to meet the eye of God than to encounter the scrutiny of beings like ourselves.

Frustrated by the coolness and firmness of his opponent in the grand object of his morning's walk, he now turned towards the house, animated with a strong desire of accomplishing his purpose by other means. The Peer now determined, as it was impossible to make Colonel Manners the aggressor, to induce his own family to take the initiative, and break

with the object of his dislike, or of his apprehension,—for, perhaps, there might be a little of both at the bottom of his heart;—and, with a resolution which was the more imperious and domineering from having seldom suffered contradiction, he sought the apartment of his son.

Edward de Vaux was just up: and was in the act of putting on, one after another, the different parts of his apparel. As this act of clothing one's person, however much pleasure people may take in it habitually, is, in itself, a laborious and troublesome operation, De Vaux's servant was helping him therein; but the appearance of Lord Dewry, and a hint, not to be mistaken, sent the man out of the room, while Lord Dewry betook him to a chair; and his son, seeing that there was not a little thunder in the dark cloud upon his father's brow, sat, expectant and half dressed, wondering what was to come next.

'Edward,' said his father, in a tone which was intended at once to express parental affection, some slight touch of sadness, and firm relying confidence upon his son's good feelings, but which, in truth, did not succeed in expressing much except a great deal of irritation and heat; 'Edward, I have come to speak with you upon last night's unfortunate business, and to give you, in a few words, my opinion upon the subject, in order that you may choose your part at once.'

Edward de Vaux, who knew his father well, —though he knew not all his motives in the present instance,—prepared himself to resist; for he divined, almost immediately from the beginning of Lord Dewry's discourse, what would be the end; being well aware—though he did not choose to put it exactly in such terms to his own heart—that a certain combination of vanity, pride, selfishness, and remorselessness in the bosom of his worthy parent, made him the exact person to resent highly even a slight offence, and to treasure long hatred for a casual word. But Edward de Vaux knew also that he himself stood in a position towards his father different from that in which any other person stood; he knew that the ties of nature, long habit, and irreproachable conduct, rendered him the only real object of Lord Dewry's love—the only being who possessed any influence over a mind which never, through life, in any other case than his own, had yielded to either persuasion or opposition. When his father paused, a little out of breath with climbing the stairs faster than necessary, and with speaking more vehemently than was becoming, he instantly replied, 'Oh, father, if you mean the business with Manners, do not think of it any more! Manners is extremely good humoured, and will forget it at once, I am sure. No farther apology is necessary.'

'Apology, sir!' exclaimed Lord Dewry; 'what do you mean? I have made no apology!'

'No,' replied De Vaux: 'but, considering that Manners was my friend; that he saved my life at the risk of his own; that he came down here at my invitation; and that he was a guest in my aunt's house; I thought it necessary to apologise for the manner in which my father had treated him, saying, that I was sure you were irritated by some other cause; and adding—as I felt sure you would—that you would be sorry for having expressed yourself so bitterly, when you reflected upon the circumstances.'

'You did, sir!' said Lord Dewry, 'you did! then I have only to tell you that you said what was not the case;'—De Vaux reddened;—'that you took a great and unwarrantable liberty with my name,' continued Lord Dewry whose passion had quite overcome every restraint; 'and that had you considered your father as much as this new friend, you would have seen that *I* was the insulted person—that *I* had a right to demand apology, and you would have broken off all connection with a person who would show so little respect to your parent; and this, sir—this is what I command you now to do, or to take the consequences of your disobedience.'

'My Lord,' answered De Vaux, cooling himself down as far as possible,—as you must already have seen, we view the matter in a very different light. It grieves me bitterly that we should disagree so severely on the very day after my return; but if you wish me to break off my acquaintance with Colonel Manners, because you have thought fit to treat him with some rudeness, I must tell you, at once, such an idea could never be entertained by me for a moment. As to the consequences, which you speak of, I am at a loss to conceive what you mean. A disagreement with you is——'

'The consequences, Captain De Vaux,' interrupted his father, with a small red spot glowing in the middle of his sallow cheek—'the consequences may be more bitter than you think. You believe that the estates of the barony, being entailed, must descend to you; but, let me tell you, young man—let me tell you,' he repeated, approaching nearer to his son, and lowering his voice in tone, but not in emphasis, —'let me tell you, you could be deprived of them by a word. But no more of that,' he added, raising his head, and resuming his usual air of dignity, which had been a good deal lost during that morning, 'no more of that—the consequences to which I alluded, and to which I now allude, are the displeasure of your father, and the knowledge that you remain the friend of a man who has insulted him.'

'Could I see,' my dear sir,' replied De Vaux, 'that Manners had insulted you——'

'It is sufficient, sir, that I see it,' interrupted his father, hastily, 'it is sufficient that I see it; and I hold myself aggrieved that my son should see it otherwise. But do as you will, Edward De Vaux—do as you will. If you are lost to a sense of filial duty, and refuse to obey my positive injunction to break with this man, you may act as you think fit.'

'I shall never, my lord, even dream of breaking with him,' replied De Vaux; 'as it

appears to me that to do so would render me an accomplice in an act of notable injustice.'

'You are dutiful, sir—you are respectful,' said Lord Dewry, setting his teeth hard; 'but do as you please—do as you please: I wish you good morning,' and, turning on his heel, he quitted the apartment.

'This is mighty disagreeable,' thought De Vaux, as he rang the bell to bring back his servant; 'this is mighty disagreeable, and mighty absurd it seems to me; but the worst part of all will be the meeting at breakfast. However, all these things must be encountered as they come, in this good, pleasant world of ours;' and he returned to his toilet.

In the meantime his father proceeded to his own apartments, laid his hand upon the bell, and rang in such a manner as to show that he was in a passion, not only to his own servant, but to the whole house. His own servant, however, a thin, dark, saturnine person, well calculated by constitutional frigidity to cope with an irritable master, was not in the least alarmed by any sign of his lord's angry mood, to which he was wont to oppose on all occasions a dull, obtuse silence, that left him without any remedy but patience. He accordingly proceeded slowly to Lord Dewry's apartment, received the objurgation for his tardiness with profound and unmoved taciturnity, listened to his lordship's orders to pack up all his dressing things, and order the horses to the carriage directly, in the same automatonical manner, and then went to take his breakfast, not at all approving of his master's purpose of setting out without refreshment. Lord Dewry, fondly fancying that he had gone to order the horses to be put to, waited in his bed-room very patiently for five minutes, then began to get angry during five minutes more, and then rang the bell for at least the same space of time. At the end of that period the man again made his appearance, and, with a face of dull unconsciousness, asked if his lordship had rung, although he had heard every succeeding stroke of the bell.

Lord Dewry stamped with rage; but, finding that it had no effect, he left the man alone to arrange his dressing things, while, for the purpose of waiting till the carriage was ready, he went down to the library, calculating of course, upon its being, as usual, the most solitary room in the whole house. If he expected to find it empty, however, he was mistaken; for Mrs. Falkland was seated at the table, writing a note; and, as there was no person, in or out of his own family, for whom his lordship entertained so great a respect—which would have been a little, perhaps, approaching to fear, if he could have feared anything—there was no one, consequently, whom he less wished to meet, at a moment when he was acting in a manner which needed the full excitement of passion and pride to appear, even in his own opinion, either dignified or gentlemanly. He was drawing back, but Mrs. Falkland raised her eyes; and his lordship, conscious that he had been wishing to retreat, advanced, of course, with a greater degree of boldness, and asked whether he interrupted her by his presence.

'Not in the least,' replied Mrs. Falkland; 'but you seem prepared for travelling. You are not thinking of setting out before breakfast?'

'Most assuredly I shall, Maria,' replied the peer. 'You do not suppose that I am going to subject myself to the pain of meeting again, in your house, a person by whom I have been so grossly insulted, as this Colonel Manners?'

'Whom you have so grossly insulted, I suppose you mean,' replied Mrs. Falkland. 'I am your sister, and consequently am not disposed to see faults; but I tell you sincerely that you equally owe an apology to me and to Colonel Manners, for your behaviour last night. The one to myself I will, of course, dispense with; but, if you do right, you will go to Colonel Manners, and tell him that something had occurred in the course of yesterday to irritate and vex you, and that you are extremely sorry that your irritation vented itself upon him.' Mrs. Falkland spoke with infinite calmness; and, when she had done, wrote another sentence of her note, leaving her brother the while to pause on the somewhat bitter matter of her discourse.

His lordship employed the time in remembering that it was a lady and his sister to whom he was opposed, and in subduing the wrath of his heart into the quieter form of sneer; although he still continued to gaze on her, while she wrote, with eyes in which his anger still maintained its ground, like a solitary post left behind a retreating army.

'Do you know,' he replied, with a curling lip, 'in such pleasant little discussions as these, we gentlemen have hardly fair play when opposed to female antagonists; for, under shelter of your sex, you women dare say things to us that it would be ungentlemanly to retort, and which are very difficult to bear.'

'Truth, I am afraid, is often difficult to bear,' replied Mrs. Falkland, 'and perhaps on such occasions you may hear it in a more unqualified manner from a woman than from one of your own sex.'

'As the matter is a difference of opinion, Maria, between you and me,' said Lord Dewry, 'it is rather like begging the question, to assume that it is truth that gives me offence. You have forgot your logic, my good sister.'

'If I ever possessed any,' rejoined Mrs. Falkland, 'I certainly should not be disposed to try it upon you in order to induce you either to make an apology, which is alike due to myself and to Colonel Manners, or to stay here without making it.'

'I understand you, my dear sister, I understand you!' exclaimed Lord Dewry; 'but do not be in a hurry. My carriage is ordered, and cannot be many minutes ere it delivers you from my presence. In the meantime I will not interrupt you farther. Good morning, Mrs Falkland!'

'Good morning!' she replied, and her brother walked towards the door. As he laid his hand upon the lock, he turned for a single glance at his sister; but Mrs. Falkland was writing on, with a rapid and easy pen, in the clear and running movements of which there was evidently not the slightest impediment from one extraneous thought in reference to the conversation which had just passed between them. Anger, hatred, malice, even active scorn itself, man can bear or retort; but utter indifference is more galling still. So Lord Dewry found it; and, throwing open the door with a degree of force that made sundry of the smaller articles of furniture dance about the room, he issued forth in search of his carriage, with wounded pride and diminished self-importance.

Gliding gracefully down the corridor towards the breakfast-room was, at that very moment, Marian de Vaux, his niece; and the sight of her beautiful face and form, with its calm and easy movements, was well calculated to tranquillise and soothe. But Lord Dewry had never been famous for being easily soothed. Dr. Johnson is said to have liked a 'good hater,' and, had he carried the predilection a little farther, the peer was just the man to merit that sort of approbation. He was not only a good hater, but he was, and always had been, the man of all others to nourish his anger, and render it both stout and permanent. Now, during the early part of the preceding evening, before he found 'metal more attractive' in his quarrel with Colonel Manners, the noble lord had, as he always did, paid very great attention to Marian de Vaux. He had sat by her, he had talked to her, he had exerted himself to be agreeable to her, when it was very evident that he was not much disposed to be agreeable to any one. But now, as Marian approached, gave her hand, and wished him good morning, he let her hand drop as soon as he had taken it, and answered her salutation by telling her he was in haste.

Somewhat surprised at the cloud upon her uncle's brow, his flashing eye, and abrupt manner, Marian drew back, in order to let him pass, and Lord Dewry took two steps more along the passage. Then, recollecting himself, however, and remembering how strange his conduct might appear, he turned, and made the whole seem stranger than ever, as all people do, when, with a heart very full of feelings, which they are afraid or ashamed to picture in their nakedness, they attempt to explain the strange behaviour to which those feelings have prompted them.

'I am obliged to quit the house, Marian,' he said, in a quick and agitated manner; disagreeable occurrences have taken place, which compel me, in justice to myself, to withdraw: the whole business is an unfortunate one, and I am afraid it may be some time before we meet again; but I will write, and explain myself fully. Good bye! I hear the carriage;' and with a rapid step he walked on, leaving Marian de Vaux not a little confounded by all that had passed.

She heard his step sound along the passage, down the stairs, and through the hall, listened to his voice giving some directions to his servant, and then to the closing of the carriage door, and the grating roll of the wheels over the gravel before the house. Then, mentally exclaiming, 'This is all very strange, and very unfortunate!' she went on towards the breakfast-room, into which a servant had just carried the urn, without closing the door behind him. The sound of her cousin Isadore's voice, speaking gaily with Colonel Manners, issued forth as she approached; but Marian de Vaux was agitated and alarmed, and, feeling that she must have time to think over her uncle's words, and to compose her mind, ere she mingled with any society, she turned to the music-room, and had entered it before she was aware that any one was there.

CHAPTER V.

LORD DEWRY'S LETTER.

It was a beautiful idea of Plato, and not at all an unchristian idea, that the sins which people have committed during life—and which in this case were termed *manes*—had an existence after death, and were the instruments for punishing those who had committed them—the worm that dieth not, and the fire that cannot be quenched. But had Plato seen into the bosom of Lord Dewry, he would have perceived that his theory might be carried a little farther; and that the sins and passions do not wait till we are dead, in order to torment their authors; but punish them even in this world, not alone in their consequences, but by their very existence. After having laboured *manibus pedibusque* to render every member of his sister's household as uncomfortable as possible, the noble lord sunk back in his carriage, with his frame exhausted and his whole heart on fire, with that flaming up of painful memories and violent passions which the occurrences we have related had excited. Unfortunately, however, it happens in the wonderful arrangement of this our earthly dwelling-place, that here our evil qualities not only torment ourselves, but others also; and the noble lord might have consoled himself with the certainty that he had, for the time at least, destroyed much tranquillity, and turned joy into bitterness.

Of all who suffered on the occasion, Marian de Vaux perhaps suffered most. Mrs. Falkland, for her part, had been very much offended, but she respected her brother too little, to permit his ill temper or rudeness to produce any lasting effect upon her. Edward de Vaux, believed that his father's present mood would not be long ere it yielded to circumstances; and Colonel Manners, though of course considerably annoyed by what had taken place

between Lord Dewry and himself, was not aware of what had passed afterwards; and consequently did not enter, as he would otherwise have done most feelingly, into the discomforts of Mrs. Falkland and his friend De Vaux. But with Marian the matter was different. She knew nothing of all the occurrences of the morning: she had seen her uncle retire on the preceding night, apparently dropping his dispute with Colonel Manners; and she never for a moment connected his extraordinary conduct of that day with the disagreement of the preceding evening.

In almost all cases of apprehension and uncertainty, the human mind has a natural tendency to connect the occurrence of the moment, whatever it may be, with the principal object of our wishes and our feelings at the time.

Thus was it with poor Marian De Vaux. It had been settled that her marriage with her cousin was to take place on the day she became of age—that is to say, in about three weeks. Now, whether she was pleased with the arrangement or not, we do not at all intend to say; but she had made up her mind to it completely; and the first thing that Lord Dewry's broken sentences suggested to her mind was, that some difficulty had occurred in regard to her union with Edward, and that his father had withdrawn the consent he had been before so willing to give.

When Lord Dewry left her, she was as pale as death; and though before she reached the breakfast-room the colour had come back into her cheek, yet all her former ideas were so completely scattered to the four winds of heaven, that she felt it would be absolutely necessary to think what her own conduct, under such circumstances, ought to be, before she met any of the party; and especially before she met her cousin Edward, as towards him, of course, the regulation of her behaviour was most important. She turned, then, as we have before said, to the music-room, and entering it ere she perceived that any one was in it, found herself there alone with no other than Edward de Vaux.

Whether he had gone there purposely or accidentally—from a habit which some people have, of returning to take a look at places where they have spent happy moments—or from a sort of presentiment that he might find Marian there, we have no means of judging; but on her part the meeting certainly was unexpected, and being such, it would hardly be fair to look narrowly into her manner of receiving her lover's first salutation, which salutation was sufficiently warm.

As soon as she recollected herself, however, she turned at once to the subject of her thoughts. 'But, Edward,' she said, "this is a most unfortunate occurrence—in regard to your father, I mean.'

'Most unfortunate indeed!' replied De Vaux, looking grave immediately.

'But tell me what it is all about, Edward?' rejoined his cousin. 'I do not understand your father's conduct. Do explain it to me!'

'I do not understand it either, my dear Marian,' answered De Vaux; 'his conduct is quite inexplicable.'

The tears would fain have run away over Marian de Vaux's cheeks; but she shut the gates in time, and only one straggler made its escape into the court of her eyes, unable to get farther. Her cousin did not see one half of what was going on in the fair tabernacle of her bosom; but he saw that she was much distressed, and endeavoured to soothe her with the same assurances wherewith he made his own mind easy in regard to his father's conduct. 'Nay, nay, dearest Marian!' he said, 'do not distress yourself about this business, unfortunate as it is. The principal part of my father's present heat in the affair will pass away, for a great share is mere passion. I cannot however flatter myself into believing that his dislike will ever entirely subside, because, as you know, he is not a man who changes easily in such matters; but all his violence and his threatenings will die away and end in nothing.'

Marian, who had now recovered from her first emotion, paused and looked pensively upon the ground; but while her bosom seemed as calm as monumental marble, there was a sad struggle going on within. 'Edward!' said she, at length. 'we cannot tell what can be your father's ultimate conduct; but indeed I think that while his present objection—or, as you call it, dislike—continues, we ought certainly to delay our marriage.'

'Good God, Marian!' exclaimed Edward de Vaux, in utter astonishment: 'in the name of heaven, my beloved, what has my father's dislike to Colonel Manners to do with our union?'

'His dislike to Colonel Manners!' said Marian, blushing a good deal as she began to perceive her mistake, and comprehended at a glance that the clearing up of the matter might make an *exposé* of her inmost thoughts that for reasons of her own she did not desire. 'His dislike to Colonel Manners! Oh, is that all? His words and conduct towards me just now, made me think that his dislike was to me, Edward, and to our union.'

'And did the thought give you so much pain, Marian?' said De Vaux, somewhat anxiously.

But Marian de Vaux had by this time completely mastered her agitation, and she answered in her usual quiet sweet tone: 'Of course it gave me great pain, Edward, to think that I had lost my uncle's regard, and great pain to think that the consequences might pain you. But tell me, was it really nothing more than his dispute with Colonel Manners, which made your father's conduct so very strange?'

'Nothing more, I can assure you,' answered her lover; 'but you know that my father, when he bursts forth into one of these fits of passion, is like Don Quixote at the puppet-show, and deals his blows to the right and left upon

all things, whether they have offended him or not.'

'Hush, hush, Edward!' cried Marian, 'he is your father, remember.'

De Vaux coloured slightly, and indeed he had not got to the end of his speech ere he had found that he had better have left it unsaid; for, notwithstanding his general fastidiousness, and a certain degree of bitter that mingled with his views of other people, he had too much taste to find any pleasure in pointing out the faults or follies of his near relations. He might feel them a little too sensitively, it is true; but he seldom made them the subject of his conversation; and he was now vexed, both that he had done so at all, and that Marian had been the person to whom he had done it.

He would fain have detained her, pleading that he had had no opportunity of conversing with her alone since his return, and urging all those little arguments which we leave to imagination. Marian, however, resisted with fortitude; and her lover, forced to content himself with a promise to take a long ramble with him after breakfast, as they had done in the days of their early youth, led her to the breakfast-room, where they found the rest of the party assembled, and conversing with as much ease and cheerfulness as if nothing had occurred to disturb the tranquillity of the morning.

'Well, Edward,' said Mrs. Falkland, 'your father would not stay longer; and I forebore to press him,' she added with a little pardonable hypocrisy, 'as I know that he has a good deal of business on his hands; and when he is determined on any point, it is vain to try to move him.' As she spoke, she looked for an instant towards Colonel Manners, to give more meaning to her words in her nephew's ears than the words themselves imported.

'I saw my father myself, my dear aunt,' replied De Vaux: 'he was with me in my room for half an hour, and explained the necessity of his departure.'

Colonel Manners could have smiled; but he thought it best to follow the lead that had been given, and to appear ignorant of any thing else having taken place, though, of course, he felt internally convinced that his unfortunate dispute with De Vaux's father had been the cause of that nobleman's sudden and abrupt departure. 'I think your father mentioned last night,' he said, in pursuance of that plan, 'that he was going to Dimden, did he not, De Vaux? Does it belong to your family?'

'It always has done so,' replied his friend: 'it is here, very near—but a few miles off; but it is not kept up as I think it should be. My father always resides at the other house; and seems to have so strong an aversion to Dimden, that, not contented with not living there, he lets it fall somewhat to decay.'

'I must make you take me there some morning,' answered Colonel Manners; 'I have heard that it contains a fine collection of pictures.'

'Fine, I believe, but small,' answered De Vaux, delighted to fancy that his friend had totally forgotten the dispute of the night before, and was ignorant of any fresh discomfort which had been produced by that morning; 'but I do not understand anything about pictures.'

'Nay, Edward, do not say that,' exclaimed Miss Falkland. 'Do you not love everything that is beautiful and fine in nature? Have you not an eye to mark every shade and every line that is worth looking at in a landscape? and do you call that not understanding pictures? I have seen you and Marian find out a thousand beautiful little tints and touches, and lights and shades in a view, that I had generalised most vulgarly.'

Colonel Manners and Mrs. Falkland smiled; and perhaps both might have said, had they spoken their thoughts, 'It was because your two cousins were in love, fair lady, and you were not!' They left the matter unexplained, however, contenting themselves with thinking that Isadore might, some time, learn the secret of finding out new beauties in a view; and De Vaux answered in his own style, 'Still, Isadore, I know nothing about pictures, depend upon it. I cannot talk of *breadth*, and *handling*, and *chiar' oscuro*, and *juice*, and *ordonnance*.'

'Except when you mean a park of artillery, De Vaux,' said Colonel Manners; 'but if I understand you rightly, you can see and feel the beauties of a picture as well as any one, though you cannot talk the jargon of a connoisseur about it.'

'Perhaps that is what I do mean,' answered his friend; 'but I believe the truth is, Manners, that you and I are both far behind in the elegant charlatanism of dilettanteship. Why I have heard a man go on by the hour with the *copia fandi* of a Cicero about a picture, the beauties of which he no more understood than the frame in which it was placed. These men's minds are like a yard measure, a thing on which a multitude of figures are written down, without the slightest use till they are properly applied by some one else. When I am seeing anything fine, heaven deliver me from the proximity of a walking dictionary of technical terms!'

'They are very useful things in their way, Edward,' answered Isadore; 'and only think, if these men can be so eloquent about things that they do not feel, solely upon the strength of their jargon, how much more eloquent you, who do feel them, would be, if you had the jargon too.'

She spoke jestingly; but De Vaux, whose spleen had been somewhat excited, answered quickly, 'I do not know, Isadore. I very often think that a great acquaintance with the jargon of art tends to destroy the feeling for it. I have heard of a great critic, who on viewing the Apollo of Belvidere, declared that had the lip been a hair's breadth longer, the god would have been lost. This was all very connoisseurish and very true, no doubt; but, depend upon it,

that man felt the beauties of the immortal statue a thousand times more, whose only exclamation on seeing it was, "Good God!" I would rather have the fresh feelings of even ignorance itself than the tutored and mechanical taste that measures the cheek-bones of a Venus, gauges the depth of colour in a Claude, or feels the edges of a book instead of looking into the inside.'

'Yes, but consider, Edward,' said Marian, who since she entered the room had been sitting silent at the breakfast-table, 'it surely does not follow that because we understand a thing well, we lose our first and natural taste for it. If I could paint like Claude or Poussin, I surely should not take less pleasure in a beautiful landscape.'

'No, Marian,' exclaimed Miss. Falkland, well knowing that De Vaux would not support his sarcasms very vigorously against his cousin, 'no; but depend upon it, no one who could paint like Claude or Poussin would talk like a connoisseur.'

'Perhaps,' said Colonel Manners, 'knowledge of all kinds may be like the fabled cup, whose influence entirely depended upon those who drank from it—to some it was death, to others immortal life; wisdom to some, and foolishness to others.'

Breakfast is a meal at which one loves to linger. The daylight and the wide world have all, more or less, an idea of labour attached to them; and, though that labour be of the lightest kind, there is still a feeling in going forth after breakfast, that we are about to take our share of the original curse: which feeling inclines man naturally to linger over the tea and coffee, and saunter to the window, or look into the fire, or play with the knife and fork for a few minutes more than is positively required. What between one oral occupation or another, then, the party at Mrs. Falkland's breakfast table contrived to pass an hour very pleasantly. Colonel Manners, when all had risen, bestowed five minutes more upon the long window—while Isadore and her mother, De Vaux and Marian, held separate councils on the future proceedings of the day—and then retired to his own room, to write a note of business to some of his people in London. He had not long been gone when the fat and venerable servant, whom we have called Peter, entered the room, bearing a note, which, with much respectful ceremony, he delivered over to the hands of Miss De Vaux. Marian turned a little red, and a little pale; and, had a jealous husband seen her receive that billet, he might have began to suspect one whose every thought was pure; but the truth was, that poor Marian had instantly recollected her uncle's hand; and, as her last ideas in respect to him had not been very pleasant, she was afraid that the new ones about to be called up by his note might be still more disagreeable. Without pausing to examine the scrawl upon the back, which implied her name, she broke the seal and read. As she did so, a gentle smile, and a softer suffusion, stole over her face; but then she became more grave, then looked vexed, and then handed the paper to Mrs. Falkland, saying, 'Do read it, my dear aunt—my uncle is both very kind and very unkind; but, indeed, it concerns you and Edward a great deal more than it does me.'

Mrs. Falkland took the letter and read it, the substance of which was to the following effect:—In the first place, he began by expressing more affection for Marian De Vaux than he had ever been known to express for man, woman, or child before in his existence. He next went on to say, that there was nothing on earth which had ever given him so much pleasure as the prospect of his son's marriage with her on whom he had been showering such praises: it was the solacing idea of his old age, he said, and the compensating joy for many a past sorrow. He then declared that he had hoped to be much with Edward and Marian during the days that were to intervene ere their marriage could be celebrated, and to have witnessed the ceremony as the most joyful and satisfactory one that he could ever behold; and next came the real object and substance-matter of the whole, for he concluded by expressing his bitter disappointment at not being able to do so, from the circumstance of a man, who had so grossly insulted him as Colonel Manners had done, continuing in his sister's house, as her honoured guest, and his son's bosom friend. Marian would understand, he said, that it was impossible for him to present himself again at Morley House while Colonel Manners was there, without loss of dignity and honour; but he nevertheless besought her to let everything proceed as if he were present; and he added a desire to see her, as soon after her marriage as possible.

While Mrs. Falkland, and then Edward de Vaux, read the letter in turn, Marian kept her eyes fixed on the ground. The fact is, however, that there was much in her uncle's letter to pain her, as well as to gratify her; and she would even willingly have sacrificed the gratifying part, if, by so doing, she could have done away the painful. It was very unpleasant, in the first place, to be pressed, by assurances of affection and kindness, to commit a gross injustice, for the gratification of the person expressing that affection; and it was not a little disagreeable to think of her marriage to Lord Dewry's son taking place without his father's presence and countenance. Women of the finest minds and the justest feelings will think of *what the world will say;* and God forbid they ever should not. Marian de Vaux, therefore, thought what the world would say, in regard to Lord Dewry being absent from her wedding; and she could not help feeling that the comments of all her kind acquaintances would be painful, both to her pride and her delicacy. All this was passing in her mind, while her eyes were busy with a pair of nondescripts on the damask table-cloth: but let it be clearly understood, that she never did Colonel Manners the wrong to wish that he should go, on account of any

pain that she herself might suffer. She wished, indeed, that her uncle would be more just, more placable, more generous; but she felt clearly where the fault lay, and she never turned her eyes in the other direction. Mrs. Falkland appreciated Marian's feelings in almost all cases; but at present she estimated to the full all that would be distressing to her niece in the conduct of her brother, and thought, perhaps, that Marian might be more affected by it than she really was. 'My dear Marian,' she said, 'this is very disagreeable for us all, and must be very painful to you, my sweet girl, in particular. Nevertheless, we must do justice to ourselves. Were it any thing like a sacrifice of mere pleasure, we might and would willingly do a great deal to satisfy your uncle, and remove the unpleasant load he casts upon us; but this is a matter of right and wrong, in which he is decidedly in the wrong; and to yield to him would not only be dishonourable to ourselves, but seems to me quite impossible. The demeanour of Colonel Manners to me and mine has been every thing that I could desire, and is in every respect accordant with his well-established character, as a most gallant soldier and accomplished gentleman; and I can neither suffer the whims nor the ill-temper of any person, however near the relationship, to alter my conduct in such a case. What do you say, Edward?'

'I agree with you entirely, my dear aunt,' he replied, 'and so I told my father this morning. Holding Manners, as I do, to be most nobly in the right, I cannot suffer either my opinion of him, or my behaviour towards him, to be changed by the sudden dislike of even my parent.'

'And let me say, Edward, a most capricious and Lord Dewry-ish dislike it is—though he be your father and my uncle,' added Miss Falkland. 'What can he find to dislike in Colonel Manners? He is not beautiful, it is true; but he saved your life at the risk of his own; he nursed you in sickness; he was your companion in danger, and your friend at all times; so that if any one loved him, it should be your father. Besides, could any one have made himself more agreeable than he has done since he has been here? What pretence does Lord Dewry think mamma could have for turning such a man out of her house, when she had so lately invited him in the most pressing terms?'

'Oh, of course, that is quite out of the question,' said Mrs. Falkland, smiling at her fair daughter's enthusiasm; 'though I cannot help thinking, Edward, that your father's design, in that letter, was to make us do so, by rendering the contrary so disagreeable to us.'

'If it were so, he will alter his behaviour,' replied De Vaux, 'when he finds that we cannot follow such a course; and I am sure you think with me, my dear aunt, that the only plan we can pursue is, to do as he bids us in his note, and proceed as if he were present.'

'Most certainly,' replied Mrs. Falkland: 'do you not think so too, Marian?'

'Oh, yes, Marian does,' cried Isadore Falkland, 'I am sure she does?'

'I am afraid we must do so,' answered Marian, smiling somewhat sadly; but, at all events, my dear aunt, I had better write to my uncle, and I will try to persuade him to change his determination.'

'Do so, my dear girl,' replied her aunt; 'though I am afraid you will find it in vain.'

Marian sat down and wrote, and put as much gentle sweetness into her note as would have gone far to soften any other man upon earth. She said not a word in regard to Colonel Manners, his quarrel with her uncle, or her own feeling on the subject: but she expressed to Lord Dewry how deeply gratified she was by his tenderness and affection; how ardently she hoped to retain it when she should become the wife of his son. She then went on to tell him, in language that came rushing from her heart, how bitterly painful it would be to her, if he continued the same determination of not being present at her marriage; and she entreated, with persuasions that none but woman could have written, that he would yield his resolution in this respect. In the whole course of her letter—though it was as artless as any collection of words that ever was penned—there was not one syllable that could offend the pride, or the vanity, or the feelings of her uncle—not one that could afford anger or irritation the least footing to rest upon. Had it been calculated upon the most experienced view of all the follies and passions of human nature, it could not have been better constructed; and yet, as we have said, it was as artless a composition as ever was penned: but the secret was that it came from a fine, a gentle, and a sensitive mind.

And now, while she folds, seals, and addresses it, with neat and careful hands, and gives it to the servant to be sent off immediately, we shall take the liberty of turning to another part of the subject, and treating of the person whose presence was the point of difficulty.

CHAPTER VI.

A WALK IN THE WOODS.

WHEN Lord Dewry quitted Colonel Manners, at the end of the flower-garden, as we have shown in a preceding chapter, the gallant soldier had turned back towards the house, but with steps much less rapid than those of the peer, from the simple fact of no violent passion moving in his breast. In truth, it would seem, after all, that man—notwithstanding his great pretensions, his reasonings about his own exist-

ence, and his conceit in his painted jacket—is not at all unlike one of those figures that children buy at fairs, with his arms and legs, and even his head, hung on by wires ; and with the passions to pull the string at the back, not only without his volition, but often against his will. Wrath pulls, and he kicks ; revenge pulls, and he strikes ; jealousy pulls, and he writhes ; fear pulls, and he runs ; love pulls, and he dances ; and, as no one of these passions was behind Colonel Manners at the time, he had walked on slowly and deliberately towards the house, sometimes turning to look at the landscape, sometimes trifling with a flower, but doing neither one nor the other, perhaps, quite so often as when he set out that day upon his morning's walk.

Still it is not to be supposed that, though no very violent affection of the mind followed Lord Dewry's departure, Colonel Manners remained perfectly indifferent to what had occurred : on the contrary, it threw him into a fit of musing, if not of deep thought, and produced reflections which ended in resolutions, such as Colonel Manners might be expected to form. At the peer's wrath he laughed, and laughed at his menaces equally, secure in that calm, self-confident courage, which, not knowing what fear is, never dreams that it can be attributed to us : but at the uncomfort that his dispute with De Vaux's father might and would produce in the family he had come to visit, Colonel Manners did not laugh. He had assented on the preceding night — in words which, with him, amounted to a promise—to forget the Baron's rudeness, and not to suffer it to abridge his stay ; but, at present, new provocation had been given, and he had every reason to believe that his visit could not be prolonged to the period he had at first proposed, without material uncomfort to the family at Morley House, however strongly their kindness or their politeness might urge his stay.

He had completely made up his mind to spend a happy three weeks with people who seemed, in every respect, so amiable ; and although he felt that it might be a little dangerous, by making him feel more acutely, from comparison, the want of domestic ties and comforts, yet he had experienced a pleasure at the idea of thus dwelling, even for a short space, in the midst of a true old English family, that made him bitterly regret the necessity of foregoing what he had set his heart upon. As he thought of going forth again alone, it seemed as if it were the voice of fate that forbade him to expose himself to the sight of feelings and enjoyments that he was never to know personally, and sent him back imperiously to the solitary state of existence which was to be his portion ; and although Colonel Manners was accustomed to the contemplation, and had nerved his mind not only to bear the uncomforts of his lot, but to resist every thought that would teach him to repine, yet there were times—and this was one —when he could not but feel the chill wind of solitude blow from the dreary prospect of the future, and blight even the enjoyment of the present.

In the breakfast-room he found Miss Falkland alone, and was not sorry so to find her ; for there was in her conversation a pleasant and good-humoured sparkling, a frank and fearless liveliness, which amused and interested him. Besides, Colonel Manners was by no means a man to object to the society of a very beautiful girl : on that score he was quite fearless ; for he had so guarded his heart by rampart, and bastion, and half-moon, that he feared no attack, either by siege or storm. The thing that he feared was, the sight of a state of happiness, which he coveted, but did not hope for ; and therefore, he could enjoy the gay conversation and pleasing presence of Isadore Falkland, without alloy, though he might apprehend that a lengthened stay, in the midst of a cheerful family circle, might deepen his regret at his own loneliness.

Now, although the house of Mrs. Falkland, like most other houses of its date, had a certain ramblingness of construction, midway between the gothic of Henry the Seventh's, and the anomalous architecture of the nineteenth century, yet the rooms were sufficiently proximate to allow Colonel Manners to hear, every now and then, as the servant opened and shut the door of the breakfast-room, the voice of Lord Dewry, in tones more sharp than was becoming. Nor was he slack in attributing the acerbity of the sounds he heard to their right cause ; so that, as we have before shown, when Mrs. Falkland and her nephew spoke of the departure of the noble Lord, as a thing that had taken place in the ordinary course of affairs, Manners had very nearly smiled.

However, having taken his determination in regard to his proceedings, and, seeing no better plan that he could pursue, he suffered the matter to pass quietly, well knowing that real delicacy never makes a noise. To say the truth, he was not at all sorry to find that Lord Dewry had taken his departure ; for he had every inclination to make himself both comfortable and agreeable while he did stay, neither of which objects are very attainable in the same house with a man who wants to fight a duel with you. After breakfast, as Manners was too much of a general to leave any thing to chance, he retired to his own apartments, in order to write such letters to London as would ensure immediate replies of the kind that would afford him a fair excuse for breaking through his engagement with De Vaux, without rendering the matter painful to his friend, by any direct reference to his father ; and, when this was accomplished, he returned to the rest of the party, whom he found in the act of seeing the footman leave the room with Marian's note to her uncle.

'We propose to take a walk, Manners,' said De Vaux, as he entered : 'I must show you the beauties of our county ; and, I think, we will go upon the path which leads across the hill, and

brings us through the wood to within a few hundred yards of the spot where we saw the gipsies. We call it Marian's walk, as she might always be found there when we were but little boys and girls.'

'It might have been called Edward's walk, as well, then,' answered Isadore, gaily; 'for, I am sure, she was never there without you, Edward. At all events, if you did not go with her, you were not long before you found her.'

'And can Miss De Vaux venture on so long a walk?' asked Colonel Manners, 'in the present day, when the extent of a lady's morning promenade is twice round the room and once round the garden—when shoemakers stare, I am told, at the name of walking-shoes, and declare that they never heard of such things?'

Marian smiled. 'You are severe upon us, Colonel Manners,' she said; 'but this walk is not so far either—though it is a little steep.'

'It seemed to me near six miles,' replied Colonel Manners; 'six miles, at least, from this spot to the place De Vaux mentions.'

'Oh, that was because you came by the road,' replied Isadore: 'if you had come over the hill you would have shortened the way by one half—but I forgot; you would have met with some accident also, as it was dark, and you were on horseback. It is not much more than two miles to the place where the path again joins the high road, after passing through Morley Wood.'

'If you find it so short, I trust you are to be of the party, Miss Falkland,' said Colonel Manners.

'Oh, most certainly,' she replied. 'It was all very well for Edward and Marian to wander through the woods together when they were boys and girls; but now propriety, you know, Colonel Manners, requires a sedate and aged chaperon; and besides, I could not leave the party of such an odd and unfortunate number as three: I should be afraid of some accident happening to you by the way.'

'But three is a fortunate number, my gay cousin,' replied De Vaux, smiling; 'not an unfortunate one, by every rule of cabalistic science.'

'In figures, but not in love, Edward,' answered his cousin, with a gay laugh. 'At least, I have read as much in your face, more than once, when I happened to be the unfortunate third——'

'Hush, hush, Isadore,' cried Marian. 'Come, let us dress ourselves to go;' and, taking her cousin's arm, she hurried her away. Now, Marian de Vaux, who knew her cousin well, was quite sure that Isadore would not push her raillery of her lover one step too far; but still she was not sorry to break off Isadore's discourse; for love is one of those things that people may talk about a great deal when they feel it not, but which they bury deep in the heart's innermost tabernacle, as soon as they know its value, and, like misers, tremble even when their treasure is named.

Every one was soon ready to set out; and, strolling through the garden separately, they proceeded to what was called the little gate, which gave them exit upon the road of which they were in search. By separately, I mean that neither of the gentlemen offered an arm to their female companions so long as they were within rows of box-wood bordering, and upon gravel walks. There would have been something ridiculous in it; although, perhaps, the quality of walking arm-in-arm is to be looked upon as one of the peculiar privileges of humanity, which as much distinguishes man from other animals as any other quality of his mind or body. He has been called, by those who strove to define him, 'a forked radish, fantastically cut,' 'a viviparous biped, without feathers,' 'a cooking animal,' and many another name. But had they called him 'the animal that walks arm-in-arm,' philosophers might have come nearer to his distinctive quality; for not only is it a thing that no other animal does, but it also gives, at once, the idea of many of the finer qualities of man's mind, and is, in fact, a sort of living hieroglyphic of affection and sympathy, and mutual assistance and support.

Now Colonel Manners and Edward de Vaux, looking upon the privilege of walking arm-in-arm in its true light, might consider it with too much reverence to enter upon it lightly, and therefore not offer to exercise it towards their fair companions, till the steepness of the way, and the openness of the country, seemed to render it necessary for their convenience and protection. There might, indeed, be another reason, which was, that in issuing forth from the house, a little derangement in the natural order of things had taken place,—some stray glove, or wandering stick, or something of the kind, had been forgotten, so as to throw out the order of the march; and Colonel Manners found himself walking beside Marian de Vaux, while De Vaux was at the elbow of his cousin Isadore, Colonel Manners, in agreeing to go out upon this expedition, had perfectly well understood the part he was held to play; and De Vaux had the most firm and implicit reliance upon his friend's tact in the business: so that by a tacit convention it was arranged between them that the long ramble which Marian had promised to take with her lover was to be as completely solitary and agreeable, as if they had not a friend or relation upon the face of the earth. But the derangement which had taken place in the position of the forces of course rendered a counter movement on the part of De Vaux and his friend necessary; and yet, as the walk they followed was narrow, and did not admit of the advance of more than two abreast, the desired evolution could not be performed without rendering the object unpleasantly obvious, till some little accident came to their aid. Colonel Manners, however, had been out in the morning, as we have already seen, to reconnoitre the ground; and as soon as he saw the difficulty, he instantly laid out the plan of

the evolutions, and fixed upon the exact position, walking on still by the side of Marian de Vaux, and talking of *les mouches qui volent*.

But to proceed. Colonel Manners and Marian reached the little gate first, and unlocked it, and then Colonel Manners halted till Miss de Vaux and Miss Falkland passed. The two ladies immediately halted on the bank of the little road, facing the gate, with Marian on the right hand and Isadore on the left. Colonel Manners then resigned the command of the gate to Edward de Vaux; but, in marching out, while the other locked the door and brought the key, Manners took up a position upon the extreme left. De Vaux then advanced to the right of the line, and, wheeling about, gave his arm to Marian; Colonel Manners offered his to Miss Falkland, and led the way up the road to the left. This detail is given as an exemplification of Manners's military skill; a quality which, unfortunately, we shall have no other opportunity of displaying throughout this book. Nor was Isadore Falkland's knowledge of strategy less marked, in taking up the position to the left, as it entirely commanded the road up which they were about to proceed; and as people in love in general walk a great deal slower than people not in love, it was necessary that she and Colonel Manners should lead the way, in order at once to give Edward and Marian de Vaux the protection of their presence and the benefit of their absence.

Colonel Manners and Miss Falkland did not lose much time in silence, for they were both people who could talk very pleasantly; and, whatever they might think in regard to themselves, they each felt that it was so in regard to the other. They spoke of many things; and Isadore's conversation, as she became better acquainted with her companion, and discovered that there were stores of feeling and kindness at his heart which would prevent him from laughing at her own enthusiasms, poured forth more of the deeper stream of her character, over which the rippling current of gay and sparkling jest that she usually displayed, flowed as much to conceal the depth, as for any other purpose. Besides, she was happy and young; and where was ever the stream, however profound, that did not sparkle when the sun shone full upon it?

Their first topic, as perhaps might be expected, was De Vaux and Marian; a topic which, under some circumstances, might have been dangerous; but Manners and Miss Falkland felt themselves perfectly secure. Still it was a delicate one; for however deep and true Colonel Manners's friendship might be for De Vaux, and however warm and enthusiastic might be the love of Isadore for her cousin Marian, there were, of course, a thousand little circumstances and feelings, upon which neither could enter, out of respect for the very friendship and affection which they felt for the two lovers. Colonel Manners, for his part, wished —if consistently with delicacy it were possible— to find out from Miss Falkland whether his opinions were fully justified; and Isadore longed to know—with all a woman's yearnings to prove to her own heart the substantial existence of real, pure, permanent unswerving love— whether her cousin had retained, during his long absence, all that tender, devoted, undivided attachment which he displayed towards Marian when present.

However, it will be easily conceived that the conversation between Miss Falkland and Colonel Manners was as nice, and delicate, and difficult an encounter of their wits as ever was practised. Colonel Manners was soon satisfied; for, in answer to some complimentary observation upon her cousin's manners and appearance, which went to praise their tranquillity as well as their elegance, Isadore answered frankly, and smiling as she did so, 'Oh, Marian is often more *commota dentro* than you think.' Miss Falkland's researches, however, were less easily pursued, and they led her, like a child hunting a butterfly, through a world of flowers. One time, she would put her problem generally, and wonder whether any man did feel, and continue to feel, as she wished to believe Edward had done towards Marian; and then she would put it particularly, and say, that she thought such an attachment as his must have been a wonderful solace and delight to him; an inexhaustible fund of sweet feelings and hopes, throughout all that he had been obliged to endure.

After Colonel Manners had amused himself a little, and saw that she might misconstrue his backwardness into something disadvantageous to his friend, he caught at the next sentence, and replied, 'Yes, indeed, I look upon De Vaux's attachment, and his engagement to your fair cousin, before he went to America, as one of the greatest blessings that could have happened to him; especially for a man whose heart was calculated to make it his happiness and his safeguard, and his leading star wherever he went.'

Isadore blushed warmly; and perhaps there was a little mingling of emotions in her blush; for, in the first place, the full confirmation of what she had wished and hoped, made her cheek glow; and, in the next place, Colonel Manners's words were so exactly a reply to the questions which had been lurking unspoken in her heart, that she almost suspected he had seen deeper into her thoughts than she had anticipated. A slight smile that followed upon his lip she considered as excessively malicious; but she was one who never suffered wrath to rankle in her bosom, but, in her way, revenged herself always on the spot. 'You speak so feelingly, Colonel Manners,' said she, just suffering a single ray of laughing light to gleam out of her fine dark eyes; 'you speak so feelingly, that I doubt not you have been guarded and led in the same manner.'

Let it be clearly kept in mind that Isadore

Falkland had only known Colonel Charles Manners fourteen hours and a half, or she would not have said what she did for the world. It may be thought that the case ought to have been quite the contrary, and that she might have ventured more had she been more intimate. But such would be an erroneous view of the matter. Isadore Falkland well knew that fourteen hours and a half was not a sufficient space of time for any rational man either to feel or to affect love for the most enchanting being that ever the world beheld, and, consequently, that she might say a sportive thing in regard to Colonel Manners's heart, without any chance of a retort which might have been disagreeable—unless he had been a fool or a coxcomb, which she knew him not to be. Had she known him a fortnight, he might have made the retort, as a jest, which would have been disagreeable enough; or as a compliment, which would have been still more disagreeable; or as a serious fact, which would have been most disagreeable; and, therefore, under such circumstances, she would never have thought of talking about the heart of one of the company, when there were but two in it. Had she known, too, that the subject was a painful one to Colonel Manners, she would as little have thought of touching upon it; and, indeed, a feeling that he was not handsome, and a vague misty sort of consciousness that that fact might have something to do with his remaining unmarried, did make her regret that she had said such words, almost as soon as they were beyond recall.

'No, indeed,' said Colonel Manners, with a touch of melancholy in his manner that could not wholly be banished; 'no, indeed, I have not been so fortunate as either to have guardian angel or leading star;' and he smiled at the triteness of his own figures of speech, but with a smile that did not counteract, to the mind of Miss Falkland, the sadness of his tone. She was vexed with herself, and would have done any thing on earth, in a reasonable way, to efface whatever painful feelings she might have awakened.

Whether Colonel Manners perceived that Miss Falkland felt she had given pain, and was vexed with herself, or whether he likewise wished to get rid of the subject, matters little, but he now changed the topic somewhat abruptly, and looking round upon the woods, into the very heart of which they were plunging, he said, 'I wonder that you fair ladies are not somewhat afraid of walking through these solitudes by yourselves.'

'There is no danger,' she replied; 'we have none but very orderly peaceable people in our part of the world: though, in truth,' she added, after a moment's thought, 'we are the last family that should say there is no danger; but I have never heard of any very serious offence being committed in our neighbourhood, since the murder of my poor uncle, which, as it is long ago, of course I do not recollect.'

'I remember having heard something of that event,' replied Colonel Manners; 'but do not recollect the particulars. Was he killed by highwaymen?'

'I believe so,' answered Miss Falkland; 'though I know too little about it to tell you exactly what happened. But—oh! yes—he was robbed and murdered, I remember; for it was proved that he had a large sum of money upon his person when he went out—several thousand pounds—and it was supposed that some one, who knew the fact, had either waylaid him, or had informed the murderers of the booty they might obtain.'

'He was, I think, your uncle by the side of Mrs. Falkland,' said Colonel Manners, who, of course, felt an interest in the matter, in proportion to the little difficulties of obtaining information.

'Yes, my mother's brother,' replied Isadore; Marian's father. You may easily imagine that such a story rendered her an object of double interest to all her family—of redoubled tenderness, I believe I should say; and even my uncle, who is not very scrupulous in regard to what he says to any one, is more kind and considerate towards Marian than towards any other human being. That great and horrible crime, however—I mean the murder—seems to have frightened others from our neighbourhood; and, though we occasionally hear of a little poaching, the people round us are uniformly well-behaved and peaceable.'

'Can you say as much for the gipsies, towards whose encampment, if I understood De Vaux right, we are bending our way?' asked Colonel Manners; 'they are, in general, very troublesome and unquiet neighbours.'

"I had not heard of their being here,' replied Miss Falkland; 'we are very seldom so honoured, I can assure you. I do not remember having seen gipsies here more than once; and that was not in this wood, but on a large common, up yonder at the top of that hill, behind the house. They are a strange race!'

'They are, indeed,' answered her companion; 'and De Vaux and I, as we passed their encampment, could not help marvelling that no government had ever thought it worth its while to pay some attention to them, either for the purpose of reclaiming them to civilized life, or, if that were judged impossible, for the purpose of obtaining those traces of knowledge which are waning from amongst them every day, but which some of their better men are said still to retain.'

'Do you mean their astrological knowledge?' asked Miss Falkland, with a look of no slight interest in the question.

'Oh, no!' answered Colonel Manners, with a smile; 'I mean the knowledge of their real history, of their original country, of their former laws, of their language in its purity, and of many facts of great interest, which, though with them they are merely traditionary, yet might be confirmed or invalidated by other testimony in our own possession.'

'They are a strange people, indeed!' said Miss Falkland. 'Do you know, Colonel Manners, that the separate existence of these gipsies and of the Jews—coming down, as it were, two distinct streams, amidst all the whirling confusion of an ocean of other nations; keeping their identity amongst wars, and battles, and changes, and the overturning of all things but themselves, retaining their habits and their thoughts, and their national character apart, in spite both of sudden and violent revolutions in society, and of the slow, but even more powerful efforts of gradual improvement and civilization;—do you know, whenever I think of this, it gives me a strange feeling of mysterious awe, that I cannot describe? It seems as if I saw more distinctly than in the common course of things the workings of the particular will of the Almighty; for I cannot understand how these facts can be accounted for by any of the common motives in existence; as in both instances, nterest, ambition, policy, and pleasure, with almost every inducement that could be enumerated, would have produced exactly the opposite result.'

'I shall not attempt to reason against you, Miss Falkland,' replied Colonel Manners, with a smile, 'and, indeed, I very much agree with you in opinion, though perhaps not in your wonder; for, being a complete believer in a special Providence, I only see the same hand in this that I think is discernible throughout creation.'

'But tell me, Colonel Manners,' said Isadore, 'have you any belief in the fortune-telling powers of the gipsies?'

'None whatever,' answered Colonel Manners.'

'Nor, perhaps, have I,' said Isadore; 'but, at the same time, it is strange that in all ages, and in all countries, as far as I can understand, these gipsies have pretended to this particular science, and have been very generally believed. At all events, it shows that they have an immemorial tradition of such a power having been possessed by their ancestors; and if it were possessed by their ancestors, why not by themselves?'

'But we have no reason to believe that it was possessed by their ancestors,' replied Colonel Manners; 'except, indeed, their own tradition, which, as you say, is evidently very ancient.'

'Nay, nay, but I think we have other proofs,' replied Isadore, 'and very strong ones, it appears to me. It is evident from the historical part of the Bible that the most ancient Egyptians had various means of divination, and even a magical influence, the reality and power of which is admitted by the sacred writers most distinctly; and consequently, when these facts are joined to an immemorial tradition of the descendants of the same nation, it seems that there is strong reason for believing that these powers existed even after the period to which the sacred volume refers.'

'I am inclined, indeed, to believe,' replied Colonel Manners, 'that the gipsies are descendants from some Egyptian tribe, although the fact has been contested strongly, and the French call them Bohemians — unreasonably enough. In regard to the powers of divination attributed to the ancient Egyptians, too, I believe them to have existed, because I believe the Bible, not only as an inspired record, but as the best authenticated history, without any exception, that exists; and at the same time I cannot suppose that men who had so grand, so comprehensive, and also so philosophical an idea of the divinity, that four thousand years have not been able to produce the slightest enlargement of it, as displayed in many passages of Holy Writ. I cannot suppose that such men would have recorded as facts anything substantially inconsistent with the majesty of that Being whom they alone knew in the age when they wrote. But you must remember that these powers, though permitted then, for reasons we know not, may have ceased now, like the powers of prophecy, and many other things of the same kind; and, did the gipsies possess such powers at present, depend upon it we should find them clothed in purple in the closets of kings instead of wandering upon bare heaths, and stealing for a livelihood.'

'You are right, I know,' replied Miss Falkland, with a smile at the lingerings of credulity that still haunted her own bosom, 'and I have convinced myself, and been convinced by others over and over again, that it is all nonsense; and yet——'

She paused, and Manners rejoined, 'One of our old humorous poets says—

"A man convinced against his will,
Is of the same opinion still."'

'And perhaps you think the verses still more applicable to a woman, Colonel Manners,' replied Miss Falkland; but that is not exactly the case with me. My weakness extends no farther than this:—were a gipsy to predict any great evil for my future life, it would make me very uneasy, however much I might struggle against the impression; and on that account I would not have my fortune told, as they call it, for the world! Would you?'

'Without the slightest apprehension,' answered Colonel Manners, laughing. 'They may try their chiromancy on me when they please, and do me all the harm they can for half-a-crown, which is, I believe, the stipulated sum.'

'That is because you are a man and a hero,' replied Miss Falkland in the same gay tone, 'and you are bound by honour and profession to be afraid of nothing; but remember, I look upon it as an agreement—you are to have your fortune told this very day, and that will do for the whole party; for I will not have mine told, and I am sure Marian shall not, if I can prevent it.'

'Oh, I will be the scape-goat with all my heart,' he replied; 'but I suppose we cannot be

far from their encampment, if your computation of miles be correct.'

'We are close to the high road,' answered Miss Falkland; 'but how far up the hill they are, you best know. However, let us wait for Edward and Marian. We must not make the babes in the wood of them; and, of course, they are a good way behind. Now, I dare say, while you and Edward were in America, you heard of Marian de Vaux till you were tired—was it not so, Colonel Manners?'

'No, indeed,' he answered, smiling; 'far from it I can assure you. Although I long ago found out by various infallible signs that De Vaux was in love, yet never, till circumstances had produced esteem and friendship, and friendship had become intimacy, did he ever mention his engagement, or the object of his attachment.'

'And then he doubtless painted her in very glowing colours,' added Isadore, trying strenuously to wile away the time till her cousins came up, they having lingered behind farther than she had expected.

'Oh, of course, all lovers are like the old painter Arellius,' answered Colonel Manners, 'and always paint the objects of their love as goddesses. But I will not gratify your malice, Miss Falkland; De Vaux has too fine a sense of the ridiculous ever to render himself so by exaggerating any feeling.'

'He has, indeed, too fine a sense of the ridiculous,' answered Isadore; 'it is his worst fault, Colonel Manners; and I fear that, like all the rest of our faults, it may some day prove his own bane; but here they come! Now, Colonel Manners, prepare to hear your fate! Edward, here is your friend going to have his fortune told.'

'You mean, going to give half-a-crown to a gipsy,' said De Vaux; 'but if you are serious, Manners, I will of course stand by you to the last, as if you were going to fight a duel, or any other unreasonable thing. Turn to the left and you will see the appointed place, as the newspapers call it, before you.'

In this expectation, however, De Vaux was mistaken; for the gipsies and their accompaniments—men, women and children, pots, kettles, and tents, had all disappeared. It must not be said, indeed, that they had left no vestige of their abode behind them, for half-a-dozen black spots burnt in the turf, and more than one pile of white wood ashes, attested the extent of their encampment; but nothing else was to be seen in the green wood, except the old oaks, and the yellow sunshine streaming through the rugged boughs, with a squirrel balancing itself on the branch of a fir, and two noisy jays screaming from tree to tree.

'This is a very Robin Hood-like scene,' said Colonel Manners, as he looked around, 'and less gloomy in the broad daylight than at eventide. But here are no gipsies, Miss Falkland, and I am afraid that you must put off hearing the future fate and fortunes of Charles Manners till another time.'

'I am very much mortified, indeed,' replied Isadore, 'and I see that you only laugh at me, Colonel Manners, without sympathising in the least with disappointed curiosity; which,—as no one believes more fully than yourself,—is a very serious event in a woman's case. However, I shall hold you bound by your promise, and look upon you engaged as a man of honour to have your fortune told the very first time you meet with a party of gipsies,—nay, more, t let me know the result also.'

She spoke with playful seriousness; and Colonel Manners replied, 'With all my heart, Miss Falkland; and indeed you shall find that your commands are so lightly borne by me, that I will take other obligations upon myself, and even seek out your favourites, the gipsies; for these protegées of yours seldom move far at a time, unless indeed all the poultry in the neighbourhood happens to be exhausted,'

'Oh, that is not the case here,' answered Isadore, 'there is plenty yet remaining in every farm-yard, and I dare say you will find them on the common.'

'I will go to-morrow, then, without fail,' he answered, 'for——' and he had nearly added words which would have betrayed his meditated departure, but he turned his speech another way; and all parties, well satisfied with their ramble, returned by the same path to the house.

Nothing occurred during the rest of the day to disturb the tranquillity of the party. The evening passed away in conversation, generally light enough, but of which we have given a speciment above, fully sufficient to show its nature and quality. Sometimes it touched, indeed, upon deeper feelings, without ever becoming grave; and sometimes it ventured farther into the realms of learning, without approaching pedantry, The annoyance of Lord Dewry's behaviour on the preceding night had at the time reconciled Colonel Manners in some degree to the idea of quitting a circle in which he found much to please and interest him; but no such annoyance interrupted the course of this evening, and he experienced more pain than he liked to acknowledge, when he thought of leaving behind him for ever a scene in which the hours passed so pleasantly. He felt, however, that the annoyance might soon be renewed, or that even if it were not, he had no right by his presence to shut out De Vaux's father from Mrs. Falkland's house; and he resolved still to adhere to his purpose, and set out for London on the day after that which was just about to follow.

CHAPTER VII.

COLONEL MANNERS HAS HIS FORTUNE TOLD.

THE ordinary and too well deserved lamentation over the fragility of human resolutions

was not in general applicable to the determinations of Charles Manners, who was usually very rigid in his adherence to his purposes, whether they were of great or small importance. But it must not be supposed that this pertinacity, if it may so be called, in pursuit of designs he had already formed, proceeded from what the world calls obstinacy. Obstinacy may be defined the act of persisting in error ; and the rectitude of precision of his judgment generally kept him from being in error at first, so that he had rarely a legitimate cause for breaking his resolution. Nor was he either of such a hard and tenacious nature as to resist all persuasion, and, like the cement of the Romans, only to grow the stiffer by the action of external things. Far from it ; he was always very willing to sacrifice his purposes—where no moral sacrifice was implied— to the wishes and solicitations of those he loved or esteemed. Nor is there any contradiction in this statement, though it may be inquired, how, then, did he break his resolutions less frequently than other people? The secret was this, and it is worth while to burden memory with it ; he never formed his resolutions without thought, which saved at least one third from fracture ; and though he broke them sometimes at the entreaty of others, he never sacrificed them to any whim of his own, which saved *very nearly* two thirds more ; for we may depend upon it that the determinations which we abandon, either from a change of circumstances, or from the persuasions of our friends, form but a very minute fraction, when compared with those that we give up, either from original error or after caprice.

It has seemed necessary to give this lecture upon resolutions, because Colonel Manners very speedily found cause to abandon the determination which he formed so vigorously on the day we spoke of in the last chapter ; and, that he might not be charged with inconsistency, it becomes requisite to enter into all those strict definitions and explanations that generally leave us as many loopholes for escape and evasion as a treaty of peace or a deed of settlement.

One resolution, however, and one promise, Colonel Manners certainly did keep, as soon as it was possible, which was, to enquire whether the gipsies were still in the neighbourhood, and to seek them out, with the full purpose of having his fortune told. Now, it may be supposed that here was a little weakness on the part of Colonel Manners—that he did give some credit to gipsy chiromancy ; nay, the reader may even push his conjectures further, and imagine him dreaming of Isadore Falkland's beautiful eyes and all their varieties of expression, from the deep and soft to the gayest sparkle that ever twinkled through two rows of long silky eyelashes. But the simple fact was, that he had promised to go, and that he went; and though he might think Miss Falkland extremely beautiful and extremely pleasing,—as every man who had been two minutes in her company must have thought, —he no more dreamed of the possibility of so fair a creature, courted and loved as he knew she must be, ever uniting herself to so ugly a man as himself—and as he sat and shaved himself that morning he thought himself uglier than ever—that Napoleon Buonaparte in the plenitude of power, and the majesty of victory, thought of a low grave beneath a willow on a rock in the Atlantic.

In regard to any belief in the gipsies' fortune-telling, there were little use of investigating closely, whether some thin fibre of the root of superstition had or had not been left in the bosom of Charles Manners. If any particle thereof did remain, it went no farther than to excite, perhaps, a slight degree of curiosity in regard to what the people would predict, more, perhaps, from feeling that it must be absurd, than from expecting any point of coincidence with his real fate : and certain it is that, whatever the gipsies might have told to Colonel Manners, he would have thought no more of, after the immediate moment, except as a matter for jest, than he would of any other kind of *sortes*, whether drawn from Virgil or Joe Miller.

It was just a quarter to six on the morning after that which had seen the walk in Morley Wood, when Manners, who was, as we have said, an early riser, gave some orders to his servant concerning his horses, and went out into the new wakened world. Having observed on the preceding day, for the purpose of carrying on the jest, the exact position of the hill on which Miss Falkland conjectured that the gipsies might have quartered themselves, he took his way across the park from that side which formed, in fact, the back of Morley House ; and. having assured himself before hand that he could find means of egress in that direction, he was soon beyond the walls, and winding up a small cart-road towards the summit.

The hill itself was somewhat singular in form. It formed a portion of that steep range of upland, which we have before described as principally covered with fine wood ; but this particular point—projecting towards the river in the form of very nearly a right angle—seemed to have cast behind it the mass of forest which still continued over the ridge of the other hills. Vestiges of the wood, too, hung in broken patches on the flanks of even this protuberance, but the summit offered nothing but a bare, open plain, full of pits and ravines, and only farther diversified by a few stunted hawthorns, and one single group of tall beeches, gathered together upon a tumulus, which covered the bodies of some of those invading warriors to whom our island was once a prey. The ascent to this plain from the small gate in the park wall, by which Colonel Manners issued forth, was in length somewhat more than a mile ; but it consisted of two distinct grades, or steps, the first of which was

formed by a little peninsula, jutting out from the salient angle of the main hill, and completely surrounded by the river on all sides except the one which served to unite it, by a narrow neck, not above three hundred yards in breadth, to the high ground we have mentioned. This small peninsular, which was itself covered with wood, rose in a rocky bank to the height of about a hundred and fifty yards above the stream; and over the narrow isthmus was carried the road which passed the park; while the wall of the park itself, just excluding the wooded banks from the grounds of Morley House, was lowered in that part, so as to leave a full view of the picturesque little promontory from the windows of the mansion. Let the reader remember all this, for his memory may be taxed hereafter.

Branching off from the right of the high road lay the path up which Colonel Manners took his way, and which passed over a track upon the side of the hill, partly hedged in and cultivated, and partly left to its own ungrateful sterility. It was steep also, but Manners was a good climber; and, knowing that Mrs. Falkland's breakfast hour was half-past nine, he did not linger by the way, but soon found himself at the summit of the hill, and on the piece of waste ground, which will be found in the county map under the name of Morley Common, or Morley Down. A good deal of dew had fallen in the night; and as the sun, who had not yet pursued his bright course far up the arch of heaven, poured the flood of his morning light upon the short blades of grass covering the common, the world would have seemed crisp with hoarfrost, had not every here and there a tuft of longer leaves caught the rays more fully, and twinkled as if sprinkled with living diamonds, as the early air moved it gently in the beams. In different directions across the common might be seen a hundred small foot-roads, winding in that tortuous and unsteady manner which is sure to mark a path trodden out by man's unguided feet, and which offers no bad comment on his uncertain, and roundabout way of arriving at his object; but, as the ground comprised many hundred acres, Colonel Manners might have been somewhat puzzled which way to take, had not his military habits at once sent him to the small planted tumulus which we have mentioned, in order to obtain a general view of the place.

Climbing up the sides of the little mound therefore he gazed round him; but neither gipsies nor tents were visible; and he might have returned to Mrs. Falkland's, satisfied that they were not there, had not a small column of faint blue smoke, rising from behind some bushes, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile, marked the presence of human beings in that direction, and shown that the bushes, though apparently not higher than a man's hat, masked some fall in the ground where the fire was kindled. Thither, then, Manners turned his steps, and soon perceived that another old sand-pit, with some bushes climbing up one of the sides, had given shelter to those of whom he was now in search.

Before he could even discover so much, he became aware, by two low whistles, that his own approach had been perceived; and, as he was advancing directly towards the sand-pit, where a number of the gipsies had paused in their various occupations to watch him, he saw a man issue forth from one of the huts, put something hastily into the bosom of his long wrapping coat, and then come forward to meet him. The gipsy, as he came nearer, gazed at him from head to foot, with a clear dark eye, which had in it nothing either of the dogged sullenness, or cunning stealthiness, that sometimes marks the male part of the race,—often the fruit both of their own vices and the world's harshness. There was something in the air and manner of the man that, to so accurate an observer as Manners, spoke a great difference between him and the general class of his people; but, to save a repetition of description, it may be as well to say at once, that the gipsy who now appeared was the same whom we have designated Pharold.

'Good morning!' said Colonel Manners, as the other came near; 'you have hid your tents very completely here.'

'Good morning!' replied the gipsy, slightly knitting his brow, as he saw the soldier's eye running over every part of their encampment with some degree of curiosity; 'Good morning!—it seems you were seeking me or mine.'

'I was so,' replied Manners, still gazing with some interest upon the old sand-pit and its picturesque tenants, with their blazing fire of sticks, and its white smoke curling through the broken ground, and amidst the scattered bushes.

'And what did you want with us, then?' asked Pharold, somewhat impatiently: 'you wanted something, or you would not have come here.'

'I wish to have my fortune told,' replied Manners with a smile, excited equally by the impatience of the gipsy's tone, and by the nature of his own errand.

The gipsy looked at him steadily, and then shook his head. 'No, no, no,' said he; 'you did not come for that. Never tell me that you would get out of your bed by daybreak, and climb a high hill, and seek a bare common, at this hour, to have your fortune told—never tell me that, Colonel Manners.'

Manners started at hearing his own name pronounced familiarly by the gipsy, though he knew the world, and all the tricks that accident and confederacy can put upon us, too well to suppose that he who is emphatically termed in Scripture 'the prince of the power of the air' had taken the trouble to send an account of his name and quality to a gipsy on a common. Still, as it was unexpected, he was surprised, and expressed it; but not in such a way as to make the gipsy believe more fully than he had done at first, that he really gave credit to the super-

natural pretensions of his nation, and came there for the purpose of consulting them upon his destiny.

'Pray, how did you become acquainted with my name?' demanded Colonel Manners calmly. 'I do not know that ever I saw you before?'

'Perhaps not,' replied the gipsy; 'but if you believe that I can tell you what you will become hereafter, why should you be surprised that I know what you are now?'

'I never said that I would believe what you told me,' answered Manners; 'but I know that, as I have been scarcely two days in this county, you must have been very expeditious in gaining my name. However, it is a matter of small consequence: I came, as I said, to have my fortune told according to your method. Will you do it?'

'It shall be done,' said the gipsy, still gazing at him inquiringly. 'It shall be done, if you really desire it: but I know you men of the world, and I cannot help thinking you came not on that errand alone. I should think that Lord Dewry had sent you, did I not know that he went away yesterday morning to Dimden, and then before mid-day back to the hall.'

'You are a very singular person,' said Colonel Manners, with a smile, 'not only because you know every thing that is going on in the place, as well as a village gossip, but because you will not believe the truth when it is told you. Once more, then, my good friend, let me assure you, that nobody sent me; and that my sole purpose is to have my fortune told: nor should I stay here any longer, even for that purpose, had I not promised another person to submit to the infliction.'

'So, so,' said the gipsy; 'so the fair lady you were walking with yesterday in Morley Wood is more wise, or, as you would call it, more credulous than you are. But do not look angry, gentleman. I will tell you your fortune presently, and will tell it truly, if you will do me a piece of service, of which I stand in need too—something that *I* have promised to do, though not for a lady with dark eyes; and you seem sent here on purpose to aid in it.'

Now Manners was half amused and half angry; but it is probable the anger would have got the better of the other feeling, had not his curiosity been excited also by the language, the manners, and the request of the gipsy, whose whole demeanour was something quite new to him. He replied, however, 'I never undertake to do anything without knowing the precise nature thereof; but if you will tell me what you desire, and I find it reasonable, I will not, of course, refuse.'

'Yes, yes! you shall hear what it is,' answered the gipsy; 'nor will you find the request unreasonable. But come hither a little away from the people, for they need not know it.' Thus speaking, he led the way towards the mound from which Manners had made his reconnoissance of the common; and, as he went, he kept his right hand in his bosom, but spoke not a word. At length, when they were fully out of ear-shot, Manners himself stopped, thinking that he had humoured his companion's caprices far enough.

'Now, my good fellow,' he said, 'nobody can either see or hear, unless they follow for the purpose. Pray what is it you wish me to do for you?'

'You are a dear friend of Mr. De Vaux, are you not?' said the gipsy abruptly, stopping and turning round as Manners spoke.

'As far as esteeming him highly, and desiring to serve him with all my heart, can make me so,' answered Manners, now more particularly surprised, 'I believe I may call myself his dear friend: but what if I be so?'

'If you be really a friend of Mr. Edward de Vaux,' said the gipsy, 'you will not object to take a letter to him.'

'Why,' answered Manners, 'although I am not exactly either a private courier, or a postman, yet if your request stops there, I can have no objection to do as you desire; reserving to myself, of course, the right of telling him where I got the letter, and the circumstances that attended my receiving it.'

'That you will do, if you please,' replied the gipsy; 'but the request does not stop there. There are conditions in regard to the delivery of the letter, which you must observe, and that punctually.'

Manners smiled. 'This is all very extraordinary,' he said: 'you speak in somewhat of a dictatorial tone, my good friend; and it is not easy for me to comprehend what business one of your class and nation can have with my friend De Vaux, so soon after his return from other lands.'

'Trouble not yourself with that, Colonel Manners,' answered the gipsy; and then added, seeing that something like a clond was gathering on his auditor's brow, 'if I have offended you, sir, I am sorry: such was not my purpose; and, believe me, I may know what is due both to you and myself better than you think. You are the commander of one of the King of England's regiments, and I am a poor gipsy; but you come to make a request to me, for granting which—as everything is barter or robbery in this world—for granting which I require something of you. So far we are as much equals as in the enjoyment of the free air, and yonder bright sunshine, and this piece of common ground. Whether there be any other difference between us, in point of higher or lower, God knows, and He alone. Thus, then, hear me patiently, while I tell you the conditions of my bargain; and afterwards I will do your bidding concerning your future fortunes—whether you esteem my skill or not, being your business, and not mine, as you seek it without my offering it.'

'I believe you are right,' replied Colonel Manners, beginning more fully to appreciate the character of him with whom he spoke: 'go on, and let me hear your conditions in regard to the delivery of this letter, which is, I

suppose, the object that you hold in your bosom.'

'It is not a pistol,' said the gipsy, producing the letter.

'I did not suppose that it was,' replied Colonel Manners; 'and had it been so, it would have been a matter of much indifference to me: but now for your conditions.'

'They are few and simple,' answered the gipsy; 'I require, or request, you to give this into Mr. De Vaux's own hand, and to choose a moment when he is not only alone, but when he is likely to have an opportunity of reading it in private; and though you may tell him when and how you received it, and add what comments you like, you must not indulge in the same tattle to other people; but must keep silence on all concerning it.'

'Your conditions are not very difficult,' replied Colonel Manners; 'I will undertake them. Give me the letter. Upon my honour,' he added, seeing that Pharold hesitated, 'I will do exactly as you have desired.'

The man gave him the letter, which was cleaner, neater, and as far as the address went, better written than the hands from which it came would have led one to anticipate. The moment he had done so, Pharold uttered a long, loud whistle, which brought a little yellow urchin of ten years old to their side, as fast as a pair of bare feet could carry him. 'Thou mayest go,' said the gipsy; 'and make haste.' The boy set off like lightning on the road which led to the river, and the gipsy again turned to Colonel Manners. 'Give me your hand, sir,' he said.

Colonel Manners did as he desired, smiling while he did so at a certain lurking feeling of the ridicule of his situation, which he could not repress. 'If any of my old fellow-soldiers were to see me here,' he thought, 'taking counsel with a gipsy upon my future fate and prospects, they would certainly think Charles Manners mad.' The gipsy, however, gazed seriously upon his hand, and then raised his eyes to the other's face, without the slightest expression in his own countenance which could raise a suspicion that he was seeking to play upon credulity.

'Colonel Manners,' said Pharold, 'before I tell you what I read here, listen to me for one moment. Most people who come to us on such an errand smile as they give us their hand; some because they believe us thoroughly, and affect by a laugh to show they do not believe at all; while some, who really do not believe, smile out of vain conceit in their own superior strength of mind: but do you remember that this that we practise is, when properly practised, a science in which we have ourselves the most confident faith. We never inquire afterwards whether what we have predicted has proved true or not, for we are always sure that it must do so: but, at all events, such confidence in our own knowledge cannot spring from nothing.'

Manners could have easily found a reply in favour of his own side of the question, but he did not think it worth while to argue logically upon chiromancy with a gipsy, although that gipsy might be somewhat superior to others of his tribe; and, therefore, without answering the arguments of Pharold, he remained in silence, while the other again turned a very steadfast glance upon his extended hand.

'Colonel Manners,' said the gipsy at length, 'if I read right, you have been a fortunate man.'

'And, in some respects, an unfortunate one,' rejoined his auditor, 'though, in truth, I have no great reason to complain.'

'Far more fortunate than unfortunate,' answered the gipsy. 'Here are but three crosses in all your life as yet; two so near the beginning, that you could not have felt them; and one—a deep one—much more lately.'

Colonel Manners smiled. 'In the past you are certainly not far wrong,' he answered; 'but it is the future I wish to hear: what of it?'

'You mock us, sir,' said the gipsy, eyeing him. 'However, you shall hear your fate as it is. You shall be fortunate and unfortunate.'

'That is the common lot of human nature,' rejoined Colonel Manners.

'But herein does your fate differ from the common lot of human nature,' replied the gipsy: 'you shall be no longer fortunate in those things wherein you have hitherto found success; for you shall do all that you think you will not do; and prosper where you neither hope nor strive.'

'That is certainly a strange fate,' answered Manners; 'for I have ever found that success is a coy goddess, who needs all our efforts to obtain her smiles, and even then gives them but sparingly.'

'It *is* a strange fate, and yet, in some sense, it is not,' answered the gipsy: 'your painters rightly represent Fortune as a woman, though they might as well have left her eyes unbandaged; for it is neither new nor marvellous to see woman fly from those that pursue her, and cast herself into the arms of those who care not for her smiles. And yet the fate written on that hand is strange, too; for it speaks of fortunes as fair without effort, for the future, as those of the past have been rendered by toil and exertion. It is a strange fate; but, nevertheless, it shall be yours: and now, forget not my words, but, when you find them verified, remember him that spoke them.'

'But are you going to tell me no more?' demanded Colonel Manners: 'I would fain have you come a little more to particulars, my good friend. One can make but little of these broad generalities.'

'One can make nothing to laugh at,' answered the gipsy, 'and therefore, I shall keep to them, though, perhaps, I could tell you more. Remember them, however, and, as you will soon find them true, lay them to your heart, sir, and let them teach you to believe that a thing is not false because you do not understand

it; that there may be truths without the range either of your knowledge or of your faculties—some that you cannot comprehend, because they have not been explained to you; and some that, if they were explained to you a thousand times, your mind is too narrow to conceive—and yet they are.'

'I wish, my good friend, that I could send you to converse with Voltaire,' said Colonel Manners.

'Who is he?' demanded Pharold; 'I do not know him.'

'No,' replied Manners; 'I daresay not: but he is a famous wit, who dabbles in philosophy, and seems inclined to teach the world, by his example, if not by his precepts, that man should credit nothing that he cannot understand.'

'And what should I do with him?' demanded the gipsy, frowning. 'I think you are mocking me—is it not so?'

'No, on my honour,' replied Colonel Manners; 'I am not mocking you. On the contrary, I think you a very extraordinary person, and fitted for a different station from that in which I find you. Whether you yourself believe that which you have told me concerning my future fortune or not, I thank you for having gratified me; and, at all events, I have derived from your conversation more that I shall remember long, than I anticipated when I came here. Will you accept of that?'

Colonel Manners offered him one of those beautiful golden pieces which are now, I fear me, lost to the world for ever, and which were then called guineas. But the gipsy put it away. 'No,' he said, 'you have undertaken to fulfil my request, and I have complied with yours. We owe each other nothing, then. Farewell!' and turning on his heel, he left Colonel Manners to descend the hill, thinking him more extraordinary than ever, from the last very ungipsy-like act, by which he had terminated their conversation.

The sun was now much higher than when Manners had trod that path before; for, according to his usual custom, the gracious luminary seemed to have run more quickly at his first rising than he does after having climbed the steep hill of heaven; and the wayfarer began to think that he might be late at Mrs. Falkland's breakfast table, where cold eggs and lukewarm coffee were the just punishments of those who linger long abed. As he had closed the park gate, however, and had not the key, he was obliged to go round and enter by the other side of the house; but this proceeding, at all events, tended to solve one mystery connected with his late interview. In the hall, the first object he beheld was the little gipsy boy whom he had seen with Pharold on the hill; and he now found him in conversation with Mrs. Falkland herself, who appeared to be asking after some of the Egyptian fraternity who were ill. Old Peter stood behind, keeping a wary eye upon the boy, whom he justly considered a very promising élève in no inferior school of petty larceny; and as Colonel Manners approached, Mrs. Falkland terminated her inquiries, and made over her little companion to the care of the footman, with orders to give him something and send him away; an order, the latter part of which was complied with in a more summary manner than she anticipated, as soon as her back was turned.

'Good morning! Colonel Manners,' she said, as they walked towards the breakfast-room; 'you find me with a curious little companion: but the fact is, that, while you were all out walking yesterday, a poor gipsy woman accidentally fell down from the high bank, close by the house, and was brought in here completely stunned. The village apothecary was away; and, as I endeavour to enact my Lady Bountiful, I did what I could for the poor creature, who soon recovered. We had half a dozen of her tribe in the servants' hall, however; and, much to the butler's and Peter's surprise,—and, I must confess, to my own also,—when they went away nothing was missing. According to a promise made by one of them, they have sent me down that little boy this morning, to tell me that the poor woman is now quite well. I wished to have despatched the apothecary to her, and offered to do so, as soon as he returned; but they seemed to have an invincible repugnance to all the professors of the healing art.'

'All people, I believe, who enjoy very good health,' replied Colonel Manners, 'feel the same towards the learned doctors—the very sight of one reminds us of losing one of the best blessings of heaven. However, the meeting with the little gipsy gentleman here explains something which I might have made a mystery of, had I not heard your account of your yesterday's interview; for this morning I had a long conversation with a gipsy on the hill,—a very singular person,—who addressed me at once by name, and seemed perfectly well acquainted with my being at your house.'

'Oh, your servant was present yesterday,' replied Mrs. Falkland, 'and, with all the dexterity of an old soldier, gave us very great assistance in bringing the poor woman to herself. I remarked, too, that her gipsy companions did but little, and contented themselves with standing round, asking irrelevant questions of the servants, which, of course, in that temple of tittle-tattle, a servants' hall, they found somebody willing to answer; so that, I daresay, there was nothing supernatural in your name being known on the hill. But how came you, Colonel Manners,' she added, with a smile,—'how came you in such deep consultation with a gipsy, at this hour of the morning? You surely have not been having your fortune told?'

'I must plead guilty, I am afraid,' replied Colonel Manners; 'but if the fault be a very grievous one, I must lay the blame upon Miss Falkland, as it was under her special injunctions that I went.'

'Indeed!' said Mrs. Falkland; 'and to answer what purpose?'

'Oh, if you mean Miss Falkland's object, I really cannot tell,' he replied; 'and my object was certainly a very foolish one, but one that leads many a man to do a still more foolish thing; I mean, it was to prove that I was not afraid.'

'And pray what was the result?' demanded Mrs. Falkland: but by this time they were at the breakfast-room door, and Colonel Manners declared that he would not communicate his fate to any one before he revealed it to Miss Falkland in general consistory. This he had soon an opportunity of doing; and the whole business was laughed at gaily enough. It is wonderful how light a little merriment soon makes everything appear; and this is the reason why, in moments of mirth and cheerfulness, so many secrets are revealed that one would often give worlds to shut up again in the casket of one's own breast. Let wise diplomatists keep far from merriment; for a light laugh or a gay witticism, whose idle wings seemed hardly strong enough to flutter it across the table, has often taken a weighty secret on its back, and flown away with it, never to return. Now, the letter that the gipsy had given Colonel Manners for his friend he had believed might be of some importance, as long as he was alone; but every gay word that was spoken on the subject of gipsies and fortune-telling took away something from its weight in his estimation; and had he been only restrained by a sense of its importance, he might have delivered the letter before breakfast was over, and made a jest of it. It has never been said that Colonel Manners was perfect; and though his mind was strong, it certainly was not without a full share of human weaknesses. Colonel Manners, however, was restrained by something besides a sense of the letter's importance—he had given his word to deliver it in a particular manner; and, whatever else he might do in the way of frailties, he never forgot a promise, though, in the present instance, it was long ere he found an opportunity of fulfilling the one he had made the gipsy on the hill.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MYSTERIOUS LETTER.

ANY one who has tried to speak with another for five minutes in private, without the pomp and circumstance of demanding an interview, will know that it is almost impossible to find the opportunity, unless the person be one's own wife. There is always something comes in the way, just at the very moment—something unforeseen and unlikely; especially if one be very anxious upon the subject. If the matter be of no importance, the opportunity presents itself at every turn; but if one be very, very desirous to unburden a full heart, or tell a tale of love, or give a valuable hint, or plead the cause of oneself, or anyone else, without the freezing influence of a formal conference, one may wait hours and days—nay, weeks and months, sometimes—without finding five minutes open in the whole day.

As soon as breakfast was over, Edward de Vaux followed Marian into the music-room; and, when Marian left him, he came to tell his friend and Isadore that they proposed making a riding party to see something in the neighbourhood, Manners went up to his room to prepare; and, as he found himself on the stairs alone with De Vaux, he had his hand in his pocket to produce the letter, when Miss Falkland's step sounded close by them, and her voice invited her cousin to come with her, and see a little present she had bought for Marian's birthday. As soon as Manners was equipped for riding, he went to De Vaux's room, calculating—as he usually dressed in half the time that his friend expended on such exertions—that he would find him there: but no one was in the apartment but a servant, who told him that Mr. de Vaux had gone down. As he passed along one of the corridors, he saw De Vaux sauntering across the lawn towards the gates of the stable-yard; but ere he could catch him, his friend was surrounded by grooms and servants, receiving his orders concerning the horses; and as they turned again towards the house, Marian and Miss Falkland were standing in their riding dresses on the steps.

'Well, I must wait,' thought Manners, reflecting sagely on the difficulties of executing punctually even so simple a commission as that which he had undertaken. 'Well, I must wait till we go to dress for dinner, then I am sure to find my opportunity.'

He was not destined, however, to remain burdened with his secret so long. The ride was pleasant, but did not extend far; and, on the return of the party, while Manners and De Vaux stood looking at their boots in the hall, Miss Falkland and her cousin retired to change their dress, and the opportunity was not lost.

'Now we are alone,' said Manners, 'let me execute a mission with which I am charged towards you, De Vaux, and which has teased me all the morning.'

'Not a challenge, I hope,' replied the other; 'for it seems a solemn embassy.'

'No, no, nothing of the kind,' answered his friend; 'but the fact is——'

'Please, sir,' said Colonel Manners' servant, opening the glass doors, 'I believe the young mare is throwing out a splint; and I did not like to——'

'Well, well,' said Manners, somewhat impatiently, 'I will come and see her myself, presently—I am engaged just now.' The man withdrew; and, resuming his discourse at the precise point where he had left off, Manners continued, 'the fact is, that gipsy, of whom I was speaking this morning, charged me with a

letter to you, which I promised to deliver in private, and when you were likely to be able to read it without interruption.'

'A gipsy!' said De Vaux, knitting his brows: 'the circle of my acquaintance has extended itself farther than I thought, and in a class, also, equally beyond my wishes and anticipations: but are you sure there is no mistake;—does he really mean me?'

'There is the letter,' replied Manners, 'with your titles, *nomen and cognomen*, as clearly superscribed as ever I saw them written: Captain the Honourable Edward de Vaux, with many *et cæteras*.'

'And in a good hand, and on tolerably clean paper,' said De Vaux, taking the letter, and gazing on the back. 'Why, this gipsy of yours must be a miracle, Manners.'

'He is a very extraordinary person, certainly,' answered his companion, 'both in his ideas and his deportment, which are equally above his class.'

'Nay, he must be a miracle—a complete miracle!' said De Vaux, laughing, 'if he can mend kettles, and write such an address as that with the same good right hand. But this must be a begging letter.'

'I think not,' replied Manners. 'It would not surprise me to find, that he knows more of you than you imagine; but, at all events, read the letter.'

De Vaux turned the letter, looked at the seal, which offered a very good impression, though one with which he was not acquainted, and then, tearing open the paper, read the contents. The very first words made his eye strain eagerly upon the page; a few lines more rendered him deadly pale; and though, as he went on, his agitation did not increase, yet the intensity of his gaze upon the sheet before him was not at all diminished; and when he had concluded it, after staring vacantly in his companion's face for a moment, he again turned to the letter, and read it attentively over once more.

'I am afraid I have brought you evil tidings, De Vaux,' said Colonel Manners, who had watched with some anxiety the changes upon the countenance of his friend: 'if so, can I serve you? You know Charles Manners; and I need scarcely say, how much pleasure it will give me to do any thing for you.'

'I must think, Manners—I must think,' replied De Vaux: 'these are strange tidings, indeed, and vouched boldly too; but I doubt whether I have a right to communicate them to any one but the person whom they affect next to my self. However, I must think ere I act at all. Forgive me for not making you a sharer of them; and excuse me now, for I am much agitated, and hardly well.'

'Let me be no restraint upon you, De Vaux,' answered his friend: 'if I can serve you, tell me; if I can alleviate any thing you suffer, by sympathy, let me share in what you feel; but do not suppose, for a moment, that I even desire to hear anything that it may be proper to keep to your own bosom. Leave me now, without ceremony: but take care how you act, De Vaux; for I see there is matter of much importance in your mind; and you are, sometimes, at least, in military affairs, a little hasty.'

'I will be as cool and thoughtful as yourself, my friend,' replied De Vaux; 'but I am agitated, and the best place for me is my own room.'

Thus saying, he left his friend, not a little surprised, indeed, that such a letter, from such a person, should have had the power to produce on the mind of a man like De Vaux the extreme agitation which he had just witnessed. De Vaux, he well knew, was not one to give credence to any thing lightly, or to yield to any slight feeling which a first impression might produce: but, in the present instance, it was evident that his friend had received a shock from some tidings, which had been totally unexpected; but which must have been probable, as well as unpleasant, to produce such an effect. The extraordinary fact, however, that news of such importance should be left to the transmission of such a man as the gipsy,—so separated by station, and state, and circumstances, from the person whom they concerned,—was, of course, a matter of much astonishment to Colonel Manners; and surprise divided his bosom with anxiety and sympathy for his friend.

It is a very disagreeable thing to have any two feelings thus making a shuttlecock of our attention; or, when they are very eager, struggling for it with mutual pertinacity; but the only way to act, under such circumstances, is, to treat them like two quarrelsome boys; and, shutting them up together, leave them to fight it out without interruption. Such was the plan which Colonel Manners now proposed to pursue; and, consequently, quitting the hall where his conversation with De Vaux had taken place, he walked straight to the library and opened the door.

What happened next was not without its importance; but, as the mind may be at this moment more anxious concerning De Vaux than concerning his companion, we will follow him up the staircase, as lightly as possible; enter his chamber; lay our hand upon his bosom; draw the curtain, and show the reader the scene within. But it may be as well first to look at that letter upon the table, before which he is sitting, with his left hand upon his brow, and his right partly covering the sheet of paper which had so disturbed him. If one can draw it gently out from underneath his fingers, while his eyes are shut, and his thoughts are busy, one may read what follows:—

'To Captain Edward de Vaux.'—Here, be it remarked, that there was a difference between the superscription and the address; the latter having borne, 'To Captain the Honourable Edward de Vaux;' while in the inside was merely written, 'To Captain Edward de Vaux.'

The difference may appear insignificant; but,

in the present instance, and with the commentary of the epistle itself thereon, it signifies a great deal. However, the letter went on,—

'To Captain Edward de Vaux.'

'Sir,

'I shall make no excuse for addressing you, as I am fully justified therein; and you yourself, however great the pain I may inflict upon you, will, eventually, admit that I am so. You are about, I understand, to unite your fate to a young lady of rank and fortune; and it is more than possible, that mutual affection, and mutual good feelings, would render your union happy. Nevertheless, believing you to be a man of honour, I feel sure that you would not like to lead any one into such an alliance with expectations which are not alone doubtful but fallacious. It is therefore necessary that you should know more precisely how you are situated; and I hesitate not to inform you, that on the title and estates held by your father, you have no earthly right to calculate; that, should you marry Miss de Vaux, you bring with you nothing but your commission as a captain in the army; and that whatever you expect from your parent will, most certainly, go to another person. Your first conclusion—as a world in which there are so many villains is naturally suspicious—will be, that this letter is written, either by some one who intends to set up some unjust claim to your rightful inheritance, by some disappointed suitor of your bride, or by some malevolent envier of another's happiness. Such, however, is not the fact. The person who writes this owes some gratitude to your family; not so much for what was accomplished, as for what your grandfather sought to accomplish in his favour. You may have heard the story,—in which case you will give more credence to the present letter,—or you may not have heard the story: but still, the way to satisfy yourself is open before you. Either resolve to question your father boldly, concerning the points herein contained; or, if you would have the facts proved, so that you cannot doubt them, come alone to the gipsies' tents, in the sand-pit, on Morley Down, this evening, or early to-morrow morning, and inquire for

'PHAROLD.'

Now, under any ordinary circumstances, the only course which De Vaux would have pursued might have been, to twist up the paper into any strange and fanciful form that the whim of the moment suggested, and put it into the first fire he met with, giving it hardly a second thought. But there were circumstances totally distinct from, and independent of, the letter itself, which gave it a degree of importance far above that which it intrinsically possessed. Edward de Vaux, though he had a slight recollection of a dark-eyed, beautiful creature, whom in his infancy he had called *mother*, lost all remembrance of her at a particular period of his life, and had never since, that he knew of, heard her name mentioned. He passed, it is true, for Lord Dewry's legitimate son, was received as such in society, and admitted as such by his own family and relations. But, if so, how was it he had never seen a picture of his mother amongst those of his ancestors, and beside that of his father, which stood in the gallery, and represented him as a man of about thirty-five years of age? How was it he had never heard his mother's jewels mentioned, though those of the two baronesses who had preceded her were often referred to? How was it that his aunt, Mrs. Falkland—as he inferred from many facts—had never seen his mother? How was it that his father had never spoken her name in his hearing? All this had often struck him as something very extraordinary: and a thousand minor circumstances, which cannot be here recapitulated, had shown him that there was some mystery in regard to his family, which had frequently given him pain. Since his return, however, something more had occurred; two or three words had been spoken by his father during their dispute concerning Colonel Manners, which had startled him at the time, with a suspicion which he had instantly banished; but which now came up again with fearful confirmation of the tidings he had just received. Lord Dewry had declared that he could be deprived of the entailed estates of the barony by a single word. At the time, that expression had but slightly alarmed him, for, well knowing the violence of his father's disposition, and the acts and words of almost insane vehemence to which any opposition would drive him, he had instantly concluded that it was a meaningless threat, spoken to punish him for the spirit of resistance he had displayed. But now it came back in its full force; and he asked himself, what could such words mean, if he were a legitimate child? The estates were entailed on the male heir; he himself was the only male heir in the present line; and if by birth he were the lawful son of Lord Dewry, no earthly power could deprive him of the lands of his forefathers. But his father, who had been educated for the bar before he succeeded to the title, had told him that a word would take them from him. A stranger now repeated the same tale, and pointed more directly to the same conclusion; and all his former recollections changed his bitter doubts into a terrible certainty.

Edward de Vaux bent down his head upon his hands, and covered his eyes with a feeling of shame and degradation that was hardly supportable. It was not alone one well of bitterness that was opened upon him; but, in whatever direction he turned his thoughts, new gall and wormwood were poured into his cup. If there had been aught on earth of which he had been proud—and, in that instance, his pride, though bridled and restrained by better feelings, had been great; if there had been anything on earth of which he had been proud, it had been of his clear descent from thirteen generations of noble ancestors. He had taken a delight, even

from boyhood, in tracing the recorded history of each; and in proving that there had not been one, from the founder of the family to his own immediate parent, who had not been well deserving of the rank and station that they held in their native land. He had drawn from his noble birth the moral which noble birth should always afford; and had determined that he, too, would deserve the title that they had received, for great deeds—that he, too, would transmit the jewel of hereditary virtue to his children as an heirloom, unimpaired in passing through his hands. He knew that, in the words of a great natural poet,—

'The rank is but the guinea's stamp;
The man's the gowd for a' that;'

and he felt that, to bear the name of noble, without being noble in his heart, was but to carry the die of value upon inferior metal, and pass upon society a base and worthless counterfeit. But all such thoughts, such remembrances, and aspirations, were now at an end. He could no longer look back to mighty men amidst his forefathers; for the world's law cut the link between him and them. He had no longer a proud name to keep up and adorn with noble actions, for he was an illegitimate son, who had unrightfully usurped the name and station which belonged not to him. His best support, his noblest designs, his most generous purposes, were cast down, and his heart was laid prostrate along with them.

But this was not all: he was now a beggar! The estates were entailed, and descended with the title; and though his father lived in somewhat gloomy retirement, yet the state with which he had surrounded his solitude De Vaux well knew could have left little accumulation from the revenues of his property. Here, then, were new evils to be encountered. Accustomed to luxury, and ease, and plenty, without one thought of that sordid ore, the want of which cramps so many a noble spirit, and stifles so many a great design, he had lived free from one of the greatest burdens upon man. He had never been lavish or extravagant, for such was not a part of his nature; but he had been generous and liberal to others, as well as at ease himself; and now he felt that every expense must be measured, and gauged by considerations of economy; that every guinea must be weighed and estimated before it was parted with; that he must look upon money in a light that he had never done before; that he must make it a continual object of thought; that his mind, like the traveller in the land of the Lilliputians, must be painfully pinioned down on every side by the irritating ties of petty cares; that his ease must be at an end, and his generosity cease.

There was more, however, far more bitter kept mingling in the draught. Round the idea of one's mother the mind of men clings with fond affection. It is the first sweet, deep thought stamped upon our infant hearts, when yet soft and capable of receiving the most profound impressions, and all the after feelings of the world are more or less light in comparison. I do not know that even in our old age we do not look back to that feeling, as the sweetest we have known through life. Our passions and our wilfulness may lead us far from the object of our filial love—we learn even to pain her heart, to oppose her wishes, to violate her commands—we may become wild, headstrong, and angry at her counsels, or her opposition; but when death has stilled her monitory voice, and nothing but calm memory remains to recapitulate her virtues and good deeds, affection, like a flower beaten to the ground by a past storm, raises up her head and smiles amongst the tears. Round that idea, as we have said, the mind clings with fond affection; and even when the early period of our loss forces memory to be silent, fancy takes the place of remembrance, and twines the image of our dead parent with a garland of graces, and beauties, and virtues, which we doubt not that she possessed. Thus had it been with De Vaux: he could just call to mind a face that had appeared to him very beautiful, and a few kind and tender words from the lips of her he had called mother, but he had fancied her all that was good, and gentle, and virtuous; and now that he was forced to look upon her as a fallen being, as one who had not only forgotten virtue herself, but, in sin, had brought him into the world, to degradation and shame, what could be his feelings towards her?

Horrid! horrid is it to say! that the world should take unto itself that awful power, claimed by Almighty Omniscience, of visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, and of making the guiltless offspring more than share the punishment inflicted on the offending parent; but so De Vaux felt that the world does, and that, in his instance, it was not alone the usual contemptible sneer, or still more contemptible neglect, that he was destined to meet; but that he must expect all the venomous pity and malignant compassion, which his fall, more than his situation, would excite, and which the hard and unfeeling beings of the earth affect to experience for those they wish most powerfully to depress.

Such accumulated feelings were all bitter enough: but there was one more bitter still, more filled with agony and degradation. De Vaux, as we have seen, was engaged to a being full of beauty, and grace, and gentleness, by promises which united them to each other, not alone as persons of high rank and fortune, having found a fitting alliance, but as two people who had known each other from infancy, had grown up in affection, and had for many a year looked forward to their marriage as the means of securing to both the utmost degree of human happiness for life—as the binding on of a talisman, that would shut out from their domestic hearth all the evil things of earth. With De Vaux, these feelings, these anticipa-

tions, were even stronger. He loved Marian with the fullest, deepest, most passionate attachment. The day for their marriage was already fixed, the bridal ornaments were all prepared, their future life had, in the conversation of that very day, been laid out before them, as on a map; and Edward de Vaux had as much doubted, when he sprang from his horse, that Marian, in all her beauty, was to be his bride within three short weeks, as he doubted of his own existence.

Now, however, what were his feelings?—now that his situation was changed in every particular,—that in fortune, and in station, he had fallen at once from the situation in which she had promised him her hand; and when he felt that he had no right to claim from Marian de Vaux the execution of a promise which she had made under different circumstances, and to which he believed that all her friends would, of course, be opposed, as soon as his real position became known? He felt that he had no right either to ask, or to expect it; and the darkest image that presented itself to his mind was, the loss of her he loved, for ever. 'She will look upon me as the child of vice,' he thought; 'she will see in me the offspring of guilt and shame, and will easily make up her mind to the separation. She is always so reasonable, and so willing to do what she considers right, at any sacrifice, that her mind will soon be tutored to forget Edward de Vaux. Were she of that warm, ardent, deep-feeling nature that casts fate and happiness upon one die, I might hope that she would still cling to me: but it is in vain thinking of it—I have no reason to hope it. She will follow the dictates of common sense and prudence, and abandon an alliance which all her friends would now oppose.'

Poor Marian! thus did her unhappy lover contrive to wring his own heart even with her very virtues. After thinking for at least an hour in gloomy silence, a faint hope crossed his mind, that he might have mistaken the import of the letter—that his apprehensions might have deceived him. Experience, gained from the consequences of our faults, almost always, sooner or later, gives us a vague, unsatisfactory consciousness, that such things exist in our bosom; and Edward de Vaux did know that he was given to torment himself needlessly. He therefore read the letter over again, and read it carefully: but, on doing so, his first impression was but the more confirmed.

'Yet it might be false,' he thought; 'the whole tale might be false, or might refer to something else, and be the mere blunder of some ignorant and presumptuous person.' But then the remembrance of his father's words returned, and all that had before seemed strange regarding his mother came up before his mind; and he once more gave himself up to despair.

What was to be done, became the next question. There was just a sufficient portion of doubt mingled with his feelings to hold him tortured in suspense, without being enough to approach even the limit of hope. This state, of course, he could have borne no longer under any circumstances; but his situation in regard to Marian rendered it absolutely necessary that he should put an end to all doubt upon the business. And yet it was terrible, most terrible, to feel, that it must be his own hand which tore away the veil that concealed the obstacles to his marriage—that it must be his own hand that cast away his happiness for ever. The thought might cross his mind of letting things take their course—of choosing to disbelieve the letter—of treating it with contempt, and of proceeding with Marian to the altar, to secure the blessing of her hand, at least, before the rest was snatched from him. But if it did cross his mind, it was but as the image of a thing that might be with some men, but could never be with him. It occupied not a moment's consideration—it left no trace behind it. To investigate the matter instantly, and to the bottom, became his determination; and, having done so, to make the result known to those interested, and at once place himself fearlessly in the situation which he had alone a right to fill. He did not forget that there might be circumstances in the story which he was about to hear which might render it necessary to conceal it from the public ear, in consideration for the feelings of his father, or of others. But to Marian, at least, the facts must be told: she was too deeply implicated in it all to be left in ignorance of what touched her whole future happiness; and De Vaux resolved that not only should she be told, but that no lips but his own should tell it, as he well knew how a few explicative words, or a well-turned round of phrases, may pervert a plain tale from its true meaning. 'I will trust none,' he thought; 'and, whatever the truth may be, from my lips alone shall she first hear it.'

The course to be pursued in his investigation became the next question. Two were pointed out in the letter itself; but from the first, that of applying to his father, he shrank with irresistible repugnance. It was not alone that De Vaux, as is common—we might almost say universal—amongst men, possessed more physical than moral courage; that he feared the fierce and angry mood of his father, irritated as he had been by late opposition, and loved not to venture upon a discussion with him, which would rouse every dark and stormy passion into fiery activity; but he feared himself also: he feared that anguish and anger, and the haughty irritation with which he was sure to be encountered, might make him forget himself, and say words that no after-sorrow could recall. There might still be a doubt, too, upon even the very subject of his fears, and he felt that were those fears unfounded, his father might justly look upon it as little better than a gross personal insult, were he asked, if he had passed his illegitimate son upon the world as legitimate, and promoted his union with the heiress of a large fortune, under the pretence of his being

heir to an honourable name and great possessions.

De Vaux might believe that such conduct was not impossible; he might also think that his father was not actuated in so doing by the mean and sordid views which, at first sight, seem the only motives assignable for such behaviour. Various circumstances might have occurred, in earlier years, to make his father acknowledge an unreal marriage with his mother: considerations for her feelings, or for his own respectability, might be amongst the rest. Once having said so, and spoken of himself as of a legitimate child, Edward de Vaux knew well that his father's proud and reserved nature might have made him ever after silent upon the subject, till explanation became almost impossible: and the deceit he had practised or permitted might have been rather the result of haughty reserve than of cunning artifice.

De Vaux felt, however, that, ere he presumed to insinuate to his father a bare suspicion of his having committed such an act, he must have much better information and clearer proof to justify the charge. When such evidence was once obtained, he might communicate the discovery he had made to Lord Dewry by letter, and thus avoid that painful collision which a personal discussion of the matter must induce; or, if he found that the evidence was faulty or inconclusive; that there was motive for suspicion against the person who tendered it, or that the whole was an interested calumny, he might lay it before his father, as an affair which required him to investigate the assertions, and punish the authors of them.

The determination, therefore, was taken to visit the gipsy himself; and the only consideration that remained was, whether to go alone, or to ask Manners to accompany him. From the latter idea he shrank, as, in that case, he must have exposed to his friend doubts and apprehensions which were bitterly humiliating, and might even compromise the secrets of others, to whom his friend was a stranger, in a manner which he had no right to do. The letter, also, bade him come alone; and, on reading it over once more, everything tended to make him give credence both to the sincerity of the writer and the accuracy of the facts. He had a faint remembrance, too, of having heard the name of Pharold mentioned by his aunt, as connected with the early days of her family; and the fact of the writer having referred him, in the first instance, to his own father, tended to show that there existed no design against himself personally. Besides, De Vaux was not a man to entertain fears of any kind for his own safety; and, as he clearly saw that Manners was totally ignorant of the contents of the letter which he had brought him, he determined to go alone, and investigate the matter thoroughly.

His next question to his own heart was, 'and, in the meantime, what shall be my conduct towards Marian? How shall I behave while I expect and believe that a few more hours will alter our situation towards each other for ever, and render that conduct wrong which was perfectly consistent with our engagement towards each other? If I change my manner, she may think my affection cooled, and feel herself unkindly treated. But then,' he thought, again, bitterly enough, 'but then that will but serve to smooth the way to the change which is ultimately to take place; and perhaps it had better be reached by some such intermediate step.' The next moment, again, his wavering thoughts turned to the other side, and he demanded whether he had any right to give her one instant's pain more than necessary. The reply was ready: 'No, no! that were cruel and unkind indeed; and should I do so, and my fears prove false, my behaviour would necessarily, from all the circumstances of the case, remain unexplained—a dark blot upon my affection towards her. Yet, hereafter, if she should learn that such tidings have been in my possession,—that such doubts have been justly working in my mind,—will she not think it wrong, and even deceitful, of me to treat her as my promised bride, when I know that she never can be such?'

At that point of his cogitations, wherein he thought, and rejected the idea, of admitting Manners to his confidence in the matter before him, as is fully displayed three or four pages back, a fancy struck him, which instantly changed into a secret resolution, not to make Manners his confidant in the business, but to open his whole heart to Marian de Vaux; and although it needed scarcely any argument to prove that she, whose fate was the most strictly bound up with his own, whose affection he certainly possessed, and whose good sense he never doubted, was the person, of all others, in whom he ought to confide; yet some idle cant, that he had read in some foolish book, or heard from some foolish people, about the absurdity of trusting a woman; some silly sneer or insignificant jest, magnified into a bugbear, through the mist of memory, had power enough to make him hide his own determination from himself, and, in the first instance, go a roundabout path to prove that he had no other resource but to tell her the whole affair, ere he boldly admitted his resolution even to his own heart, and brought forward the true and upright motives on which it was founded.

As soon as this was done, the matter was no longer difficult: all embarrassment in regard to his conduct was removed, and he felt that what was kindest and what was most affectionate, was also the most just and the most reasonable. Whatever was the truth of the assertions contained in the letter he had received, and to whatever facts it alluded, it pointed principally to his union with Marian, and the disparity of fortune and rank which the writer affirmed to exist between them. She, therefore, was a person principally concerned; and on her ultimate decision their fate must rest. De Vaux

feared not that any loss of fortune could affect Marian's regard : he could not have loved her had he supposed it would ; but he did fear that the stigma, which he believed might rest upon his birth, and which he himself felt as so deeply humiliating, might make a difference in her feelings, and, when backed by the counsel and arguments of some of her maternal relations, might make her resolves unfavourable to his hopes. But still, in telling her all, from the beginning, in concealing nothing, in acting at once affectionately and candidly, he felt that he was establishing the best claim to continued affection and esteem : he felt, too, that, if there had been deceit on any part, such conduct would be the best proof to all that he was as free as day from any participation in it, and that, whatever were the result, his honour and his name would be clear.

His determination, therefore, was backed by every motive ; but still it required great delicacy in executing it. It was necessary not to shock or to pain her,—he loved too much to do so,—and yet to be perfectly explicit. It was requisite to tell her all, and to leave her fully convinced of his unalterable love ; yet perfectly free to form her own decision on her future conduct. The hour, too, and the manner were matters for consideration, and he resolved not to delay, but let the communication be made immediately, and as a matter of importance. It would require time, however ; and, as it was already late, he was obliged to make up his mind that the visit to the gipsy must take place on the following morning : he only paused, then, to recover his composure completely, and to think of the best method of telling Marian the whole, in such a manner as to give her the least pain, yet show his confidence and affection the most clearly.

He accordingly sat still, and laid it out like the plan of a battle : but in this he was very wrong ; as, by so doing, he naturally presented Marian to his fancy in the light of the enemy. The consequences were, that his own private little demon instantly saw his advantage, and, whispering in De Vaux's ear, made his irritable and irritated spirit believe that Marian would act in a thousand different ways, which he could not blame, yet did not like. The fiend, who well knows how to seize probabilities, took hold of every particular point in Marian's character which could give him anything to cling to ; and De Vaux saw, in the glass of fancy, her beautiful countenance looking upon him as calmly and as reasonably as ever, without a shade of agitation passing over its placid sweetness during the whole time that he, with difficulty, and hesitation, and agony of spirit, and humiliation of heart, was telling her all his anxieties and apprehensions. He saw, in the same magic glass, the very spot of the room where she would stand, and the fine easy line of her figure, all displaying perfect composure and graceful ease ; and he heard the soft, sweet modulations of her voice, calm, gentle, but unaltered ; and, at length, he thought, ' I know perfectly what she will say when she hears it : she will declare that I am too hasty in my conclusions ; that I must see the gipsy, or whatever he may be, and hear the whole of what he has to say ; for that the matter is too important to be judged of hastily, and that when we know the whole, and have had time to consider, we can decide : or she will speak of consulting my aunt, or her great uncle, Lord Westerham ; or any other of those cold, disinterested people, who can give proper advice upon the subject : and yet I do my aunt injustice ; for, though of a decided nature, she is not of a cold-hearted one.'

Thus, then, did he torment himself for some minutes, taking as much pains to make himself miserable, as if there were not quite enough pain in this world without our seeking it. Nor did he stop here, but went on in the same train till he had almost wrought himself out of the determination of telling Marian at all ; though he ultimately came back to his first resolution. It is not to be concealed, that all this hesitation, and a great deal of this anguish, proceeded from his having fallen into the common error of giving the reins over to imagination, and believing that he had placed them safely in the hands of reason. Had he acted wisely, he would not have sat down to fancy anything upon the subject at all, but he would have risen up, on the contrary, as soon as his resolution was taken, and, seeking out her he loved, would have told her all his doubts and fears, without thinking at all previously either of what he would say, or what she would say.

De Vaux was, in some respects, a curious compound of very different principles. With all his errors, and with all his faults, he had a great deal of candour ; and, however keen he might be in investigating and lashing the motives of other people, he was not half so strict an inquisitor into their failings as he was into his own. As a consequence of this, though the knowledge often lay dormant, he did know, as we have before hinted, with extraordinary accuracy, all the turnings and windings, the intricacies and the absurdities, of his own nature ; and, as soon as the rush of passions was over, his conscience—like the power of the law restored after a popular tumult—would mount the tribunal, and sit in judgment on his own heart. Often, too—like the same power exerting itself to repress anarchy—his better judgment would rise up against the crowd of wild images presented by an irritable fancy, and, after a short struggle, would regain its power.

Thus, in the present instance, he felt, after a while, that he was but anticipating more misery, when he had already sufficient to endure ; and, doing in the end what he ought to have done at first, he started up, and went to seek Marian, in order to give her the opportunity of letting her own conduct speak for itself,

CHAPTER IX.

MARIAN'S TRIAL.

DE VAUX had calmed himself as much as he possibly could ; and, as he was not blessed with a face possessing that general expression of jocund felicity which is usually denominated a smiling countenance, whatever degree of gravity and care was left in his look at present, excited no particular notice in the drawing-room, whither his steps were first directed. The party there assembled now consisted of Mrs. Falkland and her daughter, with Colonel Manners ; and the latter alone saw that the agitation which he had beheld the gipsy's letter produce in his friend, had ended in permanent distress.

'Where is Marian?' said De Vaux, as he entered, not very much disappointed, perhaps, to find that she was not with the rest of the family,—'where is Marian? Do you know, Isadore?'

'I left her drawing in the little saloon at the other end of the house,' replied Isadore ; 'but that was a full hour ago, Edward ; and if she expected a gay knight or wandering troubadour to come and soothe her, either with his *gaie science*, or his *bien dire*, she may have left her solitude by this time in disappointment.'

De Vaux smiled somewhat bitterly, as he felt how much more painfully he had been employed than he would have been in the occupations to which Isadore referred : and, again leaving the drawing room, he sped along the same passages which, with a light and bounding heart, he had often trod in search of her upon some joyous errand, whom he now sought with feelings of care, anxiety, and sorrow. Marian was still where her cousin Isadore had left her ; and though, perhaps, she did think that De Vaux might have found her out sooner, when he had no ostensible motive for being absent from the side of her he loved ; yet, like a wise girl, she received him with as sweet a smile as if no such slight reproach had ever crossed her fancy. The next moment she rejoiced that she had done so ; for the expression of anguish in her lover's eyes did not escape her, and she felt at once that, for whatever other occupation De Vaux had yielded thepleasure of her society, it was for no agreeable one.

'Look at this drawing, Edward,' she said, as he came in : 'do you not think that I have made my hermit look very melancholy sitting on that rock?'

'Not so melancholy as my thoughts, dear Marian,' replied De Vaux, gazing over her shoulder, apparently at the drawing, but in truth hardly seeing a line that the paper contained ; 'not so melancholy as my thoughts.'

'And what has occurred to make them so, Edward?' she asked, turning round to read the answer in his face, before his lips could reply. 'Surely I have a right to know, if any one has, what it is that makes you unhappy.'

'You have, dear Marian,' he replied, 'and I have sought you out here to make you share in all I feel, though the task be a painful one. But come here, and sit with me on the sofa by the window, and I will tell you all ;' and, taking her by the hand, he led her on towards one of the windows that looked out over the park ; for, however strange it may be, there are undoubtedly particular positions, and particular situations, in which one can tell a disagreeable story more easily than in others.

Marian was alarmed, and she was agitated, too, within ; for she suffered not her agitation to appear upon the surface when she could help it ; and, as is very natural, she anxiously strove to arrive at some leading fact as quickly as possible. 'Something must have occurred very lately, Edward,' she said, 'for you were very gay and cheerful during our ride this morning. Have you heard anything from your father to distress you?'

'No, dearest girl,' he answered, 'I have heard nothing from him ; but I have heard from some one else much that distresses me ; but I had better show you what I have received, which will explain the matter more briefly than I could do.'

So saying, he placed the gipsy's letter in her hand. Martin took it and read it through ; but, as she knew none of the circumstances which ended in the mind of De Vaux to corroborate the doubts insinuated by the letter, she viewed its contents in a different light ; and, returning it with a smile, she asked, 'And is that all that has made you uneasy, Edward? But it is evidently all nonsense, my dear cousin. If that foolish man, who teased me so much two years ago, were not out of the country, I should think it was a plan of his to annoy you ; but depend upon it, that this is the trick of some one who wishes to disturb our happiness. What have we to do with gipsies, Edward ; and how could gipsies know anything about you and me, unless they were instructed by somebody else. And if any person in our own rank had real information, they would, of course, bring it forward themselves, and not send it through a set of gipsies.'

'You argue well, Marian,' answered De Vaux, 'and I would fain believe that you argue rightly ; but I am sorry to tell you that several things have previously occurred which tend to confirm the assertions contained in this.'

Marian turned a little pale from anxiety for him she loved. 'Tell me all, Edward,' she said ; 'I am sure you will conceal nothing from me.'

'Nothing that I know, indeed, Marian,' he answered. 'I came with the purpose of opening my whole thoughts to you ; for you have every right, that either true love or our mutual situation can give you, to know everything that I know. Well, then, my beloved, the fact which most completely tends to corroborate the assertions of this letter, occurred in a conversation between myself and my father yesterday morning. It was when he was angry in regard to his unfortunate quarrel with Manners and my opposition of the view he had taken ;

and he said, sternly and bitterly enough, that though the estates were entailed, I could be deprived of them by a word.'

'Indeed!' said Marian, thoughtfully, 'indeed!' but the next moment she added, 'No, no, Edward, it must have been said in a moment of passion, without reason, and without truth. Depend upon it, your father and my uncle would never have spoken about our marriage to me, and to all my mother's family, as he has often done, calling you somewhat particularly the heir of his titles and estates, if you were neither, as that letter says.'

'But yet the letter and his words confirm each other,' said De Vaux; 'they both tell the same tale, dear Marian. Many a true word is spoken in a moment of passion that a man has concealed for years, and would give worlds afterwards to recall. Besides, I think I have heard the name of this Pharold before. Have you not heard my aunt speak of some gipsy boy that my grandfather wished to educate?'

'Oh, no, not my aunt,' answered Marian. 'All that happened when she was very young—quite a child, I believe. It was poor Mrs. Dickinson, the old housekeeper, who used to tell us stories about that gipsy when we were children; and his name *was* Pharold, I think. She spoke of him as of a fine creature, but very wild.'

'You see, dear Marian,' said De Vaux, with a gloomy smile, 'everything tends to the same result. My father's words confirm the story of the gipsy, and what we know of the gipsy would show that he had some acquaintance with the history of our family.'

Marian mused. 'It is very strange, Edward,' she said, at length, 'and I suppose there must, indeed, be some foundation for all this. But yet I cannot understand it. If the estates are entailed, what is there on earth that can prevent your inheriting them? If the title goes to the sons, you must have it; and if it had gone to the daughters, I must have had it, you know, which would have been all the same thing. If you do believe this story, as I am afraid you do, tell me how it can be.'

Edward de Vaux paused, for he had never calculated upon going farther, or being more explicit than he had been. He had thought it would be enough to explain that he was likely to lose the lands and honors of Dewry, and that Marian would naturally draw her own conclusion, and perceive the only cause which could produce such a result. Her question, therefore, embarrassed him, for he would willingly have sealed his lips upon his mother's shame; and, though he had felt himself bound to tell her all he was likely to lose, without concealment, yet he hesitated at revealing the most painful part of his own suspicions, till those suspicions had been rendered certainties.

Marian saw him hesitate, and, raising her beautiful eyes to his face, she said, 'Edward, you have promised to tell me all, and you must make it all you think, as well as all you know.'

It was not to be resisted. 'Well, beloved, well!' he said; 'I will, though it is very, very terrible to do so; and in truth, I hardly know how to do it. Marian, did you ever see my mother?'

'No, Edward, never that I know of,' she replied; 'why do you ask?'

'Did you ever hear my aunt speak of her?' continued De Vaux, without replying to her question.

'Let me think,' said Marian. 'I believe I have; but no, I cannot remember that I ever did, now I reflect upon it; no, I never did.'

'Nor my father either?' asked De Vaux.

'No, never; certainly never,' answered Marian.

'Well, then——' said De Vaux, and he paused abruptly, fixing his eyes upon her face. Instantly a colour of the deepest crimson rushed up over the whole countenance of Marian de Vaux, dyeing cheek, and neck, and forehead, with the blush of generous shame—the shame that every pure, virtuous, inexperienced woman feels when the idea of vice in her own sex is suddenly brought before her.

Edward de Vaux turned deadly pale, as he both perceived that Marian had now caught his meaning, and comprehended most painfully the feelings in which that bright blush arose. The shame that Marian felt for the degradation of her sex touched the most agonised spot in De Vaux's heart. All that hatred for vice, and scorn for the vicious, and the pity which comes near contempt, could produce in a woman's bosom, seemed to De Vaux expressed by that blush, and pointed more or less directly towards himself; and, as I have said, he turned very pale.

The deep emotion that he felt overpowered him for an instant; but then he made a great exertion, and rising from the sofa, 'Marian,' he said, 'I have now told you all, even to my innermost thoughts; and I have but one word to add, my dear, dear cousin. Nearly three years ago, you assured me of your love, and promised me your hand; and every member of your family willingly consented to our ultimate union; but then I was the Honourable Edward de Vaux, the heir to one of the most ancient peerages in England, and to twenty thousand per annum. Things have now changed; and, if the assertions in this letter, and my own suspicions be correct, I am now a nameless, illegitimate beggar, without a right to anything on earth but my sword and my reputation—with shame upon my mother's head—with nothing to claim from my father, and without even a name that I can offer you. Under these circumstances, though I shall love you to the last day of my life, and think of you through every moment in the whole course of time, I give you back your promise, I free you from all engagement, and leave you totally untied to a connection from which your friends will naturally be glad enough to separate you.'

He spoke calmly, slowly, and distinctly; but the deadly paleness of his countenance showed

how deeply he was moved at heart; and Marian gazed upon him, with her long dark eyelashes raised high, her beautiful eyes full upon his face, and her lip slightly trembling while he went on. As soon as he had ceased, she rose from the sofa; and with agitation and ardour, all unlike her usual calmness, cast herself at once upon his bosom, with her arms circling his neck, her lips pressed upon his cheek, and her tears falling rapidly upon him. 'Edward, Edward!' she cried, 'I am yours—all yours! Could you—could you do such injustice to your own Marian? You have given me back my promise, and I here give it you again—so that, whatever comes, I may never hear from any one a single word against our union. Nay, nay, let me speak—it is seldom that I am vehement; but I must speak now—you have my promise, most solemnly, most strictly; and I consider myself as much bound to you as if I were your wife. Not only shall no other person upon earth ever have my hand, but, whatever happens, and whoever opposes it, you shall have it, when and where you choose to ask it.'

Need I say how tenderly he pressed her to his heart? Need I say how ardently, how sincerely he thanked her? But still there was some slight hesitation in his mind. He almost doubted that she fully appreciated his situation, and he felt that he could not receive such a promise as she had made till she comprehended all. He bade her think, then, of the whole; and conjured her to remember that it was not alone the loss of name and station, but that, if his anticipations were correct, everything like wealth, or even competence, would also be lost to him.

But all Marian's reserve was now gone; and the long-restrained feelings of her heart flowed forth altogether. 'Nay, nay, Edward!' she said, again seating herself on the sofa, without, however, withdrawing the small soft hand he held in his: 'nay, nay, Edward, have I not enough for us both?—enough to give us every comfort. Nay, every luxury that we ought to have, we shall still possess; and why need we wish for more? Do you think that the coach and six, and the golden-coated coachman, and the three lackeys on the footboard, ever entered into my calculations of happiness?'

'No; but, dearest Marian,' he replied, 'it is only painful to me to think that I bring nothing to unite to your property. Your large fortune renders it only the more necessary that I should have one too——'

'Hush, hush, hush!' cried Marian eagerly; but still he went on:—'I have to owe you everything, Marian; love, and happiness, and rank, and station, and fortune too.'

'And will you, Edward, *you* talk so proudly to Marian de Vaux?' she exclaimed. 'Will you be too haughty to enjoy all the blessings that we possess, because it is Marian that gives them? Is not that which is mine, yours? Has it not been so since we were children? Do not distress me, Edward, by one thought of such a kind. Indeed, I shall think you do not love me—that you are going to refuse my offered hand——'

'Oh, Marian, Marian!' he cried, kissing it a thousand times, while something very bright, not unlike a tear, glittered in his eye. 'I would not lose it for a thousand worlds! Distress you, dearest girl! I grieve to have distressed you for a moment; but I felt myself bound to tell you all.'

'Oh! that does not distress me at all,' replied Marian; 'the only thing that could distress me would be to see you grieve, or to think that you should make a difference, even in thought, between what is yours, and what is mine. I declare, Edward, I never knew what it was to feel glad of a large fortune before; but now I am thankful, not only for what my mother left me, but for every shilling that my good old grand-uncle and guardian has scraped together for me, by his economy thereof. Three thousand a-year, Edward—consider, we shall be as rich as princes: and if it had not been for that, this misfortune might have obliged us to wait on for many a year, till you had made a fortune in India, and very likely have lost your health, which no fortune could have compensated.'

Marian de Vaux spoke in a manner totally different from that which her cousin had seen her display for many a year. Her beautiful eyes were full of light and feeling; a smile, half tender, half playful, hovered over her lip, and her voice was full of eager kindness and thrilling affection. He had remembered her thus as a girl; but, as she had grown up towards womanhood, either the feelings which had animated her bosom with such a warm and enthusiastic glow had passed away, or the expression of them had been gradually suppressed. Now, again, she was all that he remembered her, and to see her so plunged him into a sweet vision of the past—connected, though, by some fine golden threads, with the present. He had seated himself on the sofa beside her; and, still holding her right hand in his, he had glided his left arm round her waist, and then, with his eyes fixed on a distant spot on the floor, he remained in silence for two or three moments after she had done speaking. Unless man were a cold, unfeeling piece of ticking mechanism, like a watch, our measures of time would always be by our sensations; and as Marian had at that moment given way to all the eagerness of her heart, the two moments that Edward de Vaux remained in thought seemed to her an age. 'What is the matter, Edward?' she said. 'Are you still unhappy?'

'No, my beloved,' he answered, looking up in her face with a glance that fully confirmed his words: 'no, my beloved; I am most happy! so happy, indeed, that, were I placed as I was before, I would almost again undergo the pain which this discovery first caused me, to enjoy the delight which my Marian's conduct has bestowed.'

'And did you doubt what that conduct would

be, Edward?' she demanded, half reproachfully. Edward de Vaux coloured, and might have hesitated; for conscience, that bitter smiter, who always finds his time to apply the lash, now struck him severely for all those images which an irritable fancy had suggested concerning Marian's conduct. But she saved him the pain of a reply, which must either have been mortifying or insincere. 'And did you doubt what my conduct would be?' she asked; and in the next moment she added,—'But never mind, dear Edward; you see what it is, and do never doubt it again.'

'I will never doubt, as long as I live,—my own beloved girl,'—he answered, ardently; 'I will never doubt, as long as I live, that it will on every occasion be all that is good, and noble, and generous: but it was not that alone, my Marian, that made me so happy—so very, very happy.'

'What was it, then, dear Edward?' she asked, in some surprise; for Marian, with all the quickness of a woman's perception, had noticed the passing colour that came into De Vaux's cheek; and, knowing him, and all the little intricacies of his heart, better than he thought,—better, perhaps, than she thought herself,—she had instantly set down the blush to its right cause, and said in her own heart, 'Edward has been tormenting himself with fancies.' Now, however, his words puzzled her, though a latent consciousness of having—in the urgency of the moment, and in the desire to sooth and render Edward patient under his misfortune—a latent consciousness of having given free course to feelings and enthusiasms which she had long held close prisoners in her bosom, made her now feel embarrassed in turn; and a bright warm blush, partly from curiosity, partly from that consciousness, mantled for a moment in her cheek.

Edward de Vaux gazed upon her, as she put her question, with a smile, full of deep, fond affection—with a sort of triumphant happiness, too, in his look that made her inclined, she knew not why, to hide her eyes upon his bosom, as she had done long ago, when first she had acknowledged to him the love that he had won, and witnessed the joy that it called up in his countenance. 'I will tell you what it is, dearest,' he answered, 'that makes me now so happy, that I should have considered anything but yourself a light sacrifice to obtain such joy. It is, that the misfortune which has befallen me has called forth my beloved Marian's true and natural character, and shown her to me fully, as the same dear, excellent, feeling, enthusiastic girl that I have always pictured her to my own imagination—such as her feelings as a child gave promise that she would be—such as I remember her appearing constantly, not many years ago.'

Marian blushed, and looked down; and there was a swimming moisture in her eyes, which a little more might have caused to overflow in tears: but they would not have been unhappy ones. She felt——

But it is difficult to say what she felt. It was not that she felt detected, for that word would imply a shade of culpability which she did not feel; but she felt that she had betrayed herself—that a veil which she had cast over the true features of her mind, from many a deep and complicated motive, had been raised, had been snatched away, and could never be dropped effectually again. The effect which the raising of that veil had produced was all glad and gratifying, it is true; but still there was that fluttering emotion at her heart, which the disclosure of long-hidden feelings must always produce: she felt as if she had told her love for the first time over again; and she knew, too, that she might be called upon to assign motives, and give reasons, which would be difficult to explain, but which she determined not to withhold, for many a good and sufficient cause. But all this agitated her. She blushed, she almost trembled; and Edward de Vaux was but the more convinced, from the agitation which he beheld, that the concealment of her real character, and the repression of her finest feelings, had been a conscious and voluntary act on the part of her he loved.

He became curious, as well he might be, to learn more; and, as Marian still sat silently beside him, he tried the tacit persuasion of a gentle kiss upon the blushing cheek, that almost touched his shoulder. She turned round towards him with a thoughtful smile; but, as she did not speak, he asked more boldly, 'Why, Marian, why, dearest, after having given me your love, and promised me your hand, have you let that dear little heart play at hide and seek with me, till I have sometimes almost doubted whether it was my own?'

'You should not have doubted that, De Vaux,' Marian answered; 'but, if you really wish to know why I have somewhat changed my conduct since I was a girl, and why I have, in some degree, repressed feelings that I have not experienced the less warmly, I will let you into some of the secrets of a woman's heart; but you must promise me, Edward, never to abuse the trust,' she added, smiling more gaily; 'and you must promise, too, not to be angry with anything I shall say.'

'Angry! angry with you, Marian!' said De Vaux; 'do not believe such a thing possible.'

Marian smiled again, for there is often a sort of prophetic presentiment in the breast of woman, which teaches her that, however much she may rule and command the lover, the husband will not receive the power in vain; and, perhaps, it is this knowledge of the shortness of their reign which sometimes makes woman abuse it a little while it lasts. Marian smiled again at De Vaux's words, and then replied, 'Well, then, Edward, keep your part of the compact, and I will tell you all. You say I have changed very much since I was a girl; and that is but natural, Edward; for, depend upon it, every woman does change, if she feels

and thinks at all deeply. As a girl, her words and her actions are all of but little importance in the eyes of those around her, or in her own, unless she be nourished in conceit and affectation from her cradle; and, during the first fifteen or sixteen years of her life, though she may be taught to act like a lady, yet she sees no reason for concealing anything she feels, or anything she thinks, if it be not likely to hurt the feelings of others. As she goes on towards womanhood, however, the world changes its conduct towards her, and she finds it necessary to change towards it. She learns to look upon trifles in her own conduct, and in the conduct of others towards her, as matters of importance: the world and society assume a different aspect: she trembles lest she should say, or do, or feel what is wrong; and very often she expresses too little of what she feels, lest she should express too much. Then, too, Edward,' continued Marian, with the colour which had partly left her cheek while she spoke coming richly up again, and spreading over her whole face, 'then, too, Edward, if she learns to love, all those fears and apprehensions are a thousand fold increased. She is terrified at her own sensations, and almost thinks it wrong and sacrilegious to suffer that one being by whom her affections are won to take that station in her heart, above all the rest of the world, which she has hitherto devoted solely to a being beyond the world. Perhaps before that time, she may have longed to love and be beloved; but the first moment she feels that it is so,—especially if it come upon her suddenly,—depend upon it, her feelings are, more or less, those of terror.'

De Vaux smiled, but his hand pressed tenderly upon Marian's as he did so; and she felt it was as much a smile of thanks, as if he had accompanied it with words of ever so much gratitude for the picture of her feelings that she had given him. She paused, however, for she was coming to matter which she feared might not please him so well; and his thoughts turning, too, in the same direction, he said, after waiting for a few moments to see if she would go on, 'But, dear Marian, this happens to every woman without producing such a change as I have seen in you; and besides, what I have seen to-day, Marian, has shown me fully that there has been some more distinct and individual motive. Tell it me Marian, tell it me, my beloved; and believe me, I will not abuse your confidence.'

'Nor be angry?' she said, smiling again. 'Remember, that is a principal part of our agreement. Well, then, I will go on. When first we were engaged to each other, Edward, my chief thought—as, indeed, it ever has been since—was how to make the man I loved most completely happy, as far as my own conduct was concerned; and I was reading at that time a very clever book, which recommended women, on their marriage, to study, not alone the general character of their husband, but all his individual opinions and thoughts, in order to make their own behaviour completely conformable thereto; it asserted, also, that such was the surest way of winning happiness for both. I believed it, and resolved to try to follow the advice even before marriage. I listened to everything you said, concerning the conduct of other women that we knew, with a determination of trying to acquire the qualities that you praised, and to avoid all that you blamed.'

'But, good God! my dearest Marian!' exclaimed Edward, warmly, 'surely I did not blame them for suffering the beauties or the excellences of their natural characters to appear, nor praise them for assuming a coldness that was the most opposed to the general warmth of their nature?'

'Not exactly, Edward,' replied Marian; 'but I will tell you what you did, which came much to the same purpose. Though whatever I did seemed to give you pleasure, yet, when you spoke of any of our acquaintance, you were so severe upon what appeared to me very slight mistakes in their demeanour; you were so rigid in your ideas of what was right in general behaviour; you even once censured so heavily a display, rather too open, of attachment to her husband, on the part of a lady whom we both knew, that I began to find that your opinions on such subjects were very nice indeed: and knowing,' added Marian, with a smile, which De Vaux felt fully, 'and knowing that my lover, with these nice opinions, was peculiarly sensitive to everything that he thought could draw the slightest degree of ridicule upon him or his, I determined so to school my own conduct, and to repress the expression of my own feelings, as to insure his heart against the slightest annoyance, concerning a word, or a movement, or a look of his wife.'

Marian paused, and Edward de Vaux, with his eyes bent upon the ground, remained silent, for two or three minutes, till she became alarmed. 'You promised me, Edward,' she said, 'not to be angry.'

'Not to be angry with you, my beloved girl,' he said; 'but I did not promise not to be angry with myself; and well, well do I deserve it.'

'Nay, nor must you be angry with yourself either, Edward, replied Marian; 'if you are, I shall still think some of it lights upon me. If in seeking the means of rendering you happy, I have made you unhappy, I shall meet with punishment instead of reward.'

'Dearest Marian,' answered De Vaux, 'it were vain to deny it. I have been a fastidious fool hitherto; and, like the other sneerers of this world, have been seeking the mote in my brother's eye, while I have forgot the beam in my own. But henceforth I will take example by you, dearest Marian, and so school my own heart as to get over that feeling of the ridiculous in others, and terror for it in myself, which I now find and believe to be a vice, and not a quality.'

Marian shook her head with a doubtful smile, as if she would have said, 'It is in your nature, Edward.'

'I will, indeed, Marian,' he continued; 'and you shall see what a strong resolution can do even with Edward de Vaux. But you must promise me in return, dearest, to reward my efforts, by casting off the reserve that my foolish fastidiousness has drawn over you. The qualities of my Marian's heart and mind are too beautiful to be hidden beneath such a veil.'

Marian smiled again, but looked a little thoughtful, for she felt that the task her lover would impose was no easy one. 'I will do my best, Edward,' she said; 'but it must be by degrees. In the first place, all the world would think me mad, if I were to change suddenly from the quiet still-life demeanour of Marian de Vaux, and take up the gay, lively, enthusiastic character of Isadore Falkland; and, in the next place, it would be impossible, for I have now been training myself to this behaviour so long, that it has become quite habitual to me; and, whatever are the emotions that I feel at heart, my first effort—even before I know I am making one—is to keep those emotions from appearing. Sometimes, indeed,' she added, laughing, 'they break through all restraint, as they have done to-day; but that is only on great occasions. However, I will do my best to change back again; and, perhaps, as I have overdone the quiet and composed, I may find the happy medium, in returning to my old thoughtlessness. But, in the meantime, Edward, never you be deceived in regard to what I feel. You have seen the veil, as you call it, cast away; and you know entirely what is beneath it.'

'A thousand, thousand thanks, for letting me see it, Marian,' he replied: 'but I can never thank you enough, my beloved, for all that you have done this day—for shewing me your heart, and for giving me a glimpse, too, of my own.'

'But I owe you thanks, too, Edward—deep and many thanks,' replied Marian, 'for the generous candour of your conduct; and for not shrinking, even for a moment, from making me a sharer in your thoughts and feelings, however painful they might be to communicate. And oh, Edward, let me intreat you ever to pursue the same course hereafter. Let me be the sharer of all your thoughts; let me hear everything painful or to be feared, from your own lips, and the tale will lose half its bitterness; and I promise you that, if I cannot assist you with advice and support, I will not embarrass you by womanly fear, or weak irresolution.'

'I will, Marian, I will!' replied De Vaux; 'for I can contemplate no case in which what I had to communicate would combine half so many sources of pain and anxiety as that which is just past: and now, dearest, then, give me your advice in regard to the course I ought to pursue in investigating this very painful business.'

'Do you not think, Edward,' said Marian, 'that you had better not investigate it at all? If, by letting it rest, and treating this information with contempt, you were likely to injure any one, of course I should say, sift it to the last grain. But it seems that these people, whoever they are, that send you such disagreeable tidings, hold out our approaching marriage as the only motive for your inquiry farther; and, as you have told me the whole without reserve, and I am perfectly satisfied, I see no reason why you should trouble yourself farther about it. If you are to lose the titles and estates of your father on any pretext, let the gipsies send their information to the person who is to benefit by your loss. I would think no more of it.'

De Vaux shook his head, for his vivid imagination and excitable nature did not fit him for sitting down quietly under such a load of suspense. 'No, no, Marian!' he said, I could not bear such uncertainty; I should not know an hour's peace, and whenever a letter was put into my hand, whenever a stranger desired to speak with me, I should dread some evil tidings. Investigate the matter thoroughly I must. If I find these insinuations false, my peace will be established upon a surer rock than ever; and my disposition may not be the worse for the ordeal I have undergone, and the lessons I have received. If my fears prove just, and these tidings true, I think, dear Marian—I think,' and he drew her nearer to his heart—'I think that, with the assurance of such love as yours, I can see all the rest that was bright in my lot pass away from me without a sigh.'

Marian's heart was relieved, for she had doubted how Edward de Vaux would endure the certainty which might soon be forced upon him, of the severe reverses which were yet unconfirmed. She had doubted, and, with all the skilful tenderness of a woman's heart, she had at once perceived that the most open assurances of her own love were the surest antidotes that she could offer him against the evils of the day. She had acted, it is true, by impulse; but there is always some rapidly operating motive even at the bottom of impulse itself, which, nine times out of ten, works with wonderful sagacity. There are many moments in the life of man, when his boasted reason—which is but a slow and considerate personage—has not time to act; and when, if there were no power but this same reason to save us from drowning, we might drown beyond redemption for anything that reason would do to help us: but God, who gives their never-failing instinct to the beasts, does not leave man without resource in those moments when haste, and need, and apprehension, render him little better than a judgmentless animal, and has afforded him also a kind of instinct—a power which only acts on sudden emergencies, when reason has not time; which power we call impulse, but which is neither more nor less than the instinct of a hurry.

Marian de Vaux had, in the first instance, acted upon impulse, but as she went on, finding

that impulse was quite right, and that the only means to sooth and to strengthen her lover under his misfortunes, was to let him see throughout the full extent of her love for him, she cast away, as we have seen, every reserve, and showed Edward de Vaux that he could but lose little, whatever he lost, compared with that inestimable affection which was still his own.

Marian's heart was relieved by perceiving that her conduct had been successful, and that De Vaux was nerved against the worst; and, as she had no particular taste for suspense herself, any more than he had, she now recalled her words, and advised him, if his feelings were such as he expressed, to pursue the investigation at once.

'That, Marian, for all our sakes and on every account, I must do,' he replied; 'but the only question with me is, in which way had I better follow the inquiry. Here are two courses pointed out in this letter,—to apply at once to my father; or, in the first place, to visit this gipsy, and to ascertain precisely what information he possesses. I have already considered, and believe that the latter course would be the best; but my Marian has every right to guide me.'

'Oh! do not go to the gipsy,' cried Marian on the first impulse—but impulse was wrong in this instance, and Marian soon found that it was so. Edward himself paused, and thought over the matter again; but, on consideration, Marian remembered many an objection to the plan of seeking information from Lord Dewry himself. She knew his haughtiness and his violence, and she knew, too, that De Vaux, tingling under a sense of degradation, and feeling that such degradation was attributable to his father, was in no state of mind to submit to the proud and insulting tone Lord Dewry too often employed, or to speak calmly and dispassionately upon a subject, in regard to which his whole heart was bleeding, and every better feeling deeply wounded. She dreaded the collision which might ensue between the two, and she thought it also very probable that Lord Dewry might refuse all information on the subject. 'I am afraid I am wrong, Edward,' she said at length; 'I have a dread of those gipsies,—I do not know why; but still, perhaps, you should be more sure that such insinuations as these are not mere calumny, before you speak to your father about it.'

'That is true, my love,' replied De Vaux; 'and, besides, I have just remembered that, if I wish to have the gipsy's information at all, I must have it before I see my father. He here in this letter tells me to come either this evening, or to-morrow early. Now, it is too late to go to my father this evening, and before I could be back, if I went over to-morrow, the time would be expired, and the gipsy gone. I think my best plan will be to go early to the gipsy camp to-morrow morning, hear all the man has to say, and then, if necessary, I can ride over to the hall and speak with my father ere he goes out.'

'Yes, I doubt not, that such is the best course,' replied Marian; 'but for God's sake, Edward, take care of those gipsies. They are, I believe, a terrible race of savages; and you told me that this was a large encampment which you saw in the wood. They might murder you, Edward, for your purse or your watch.'

'Oh, no fear, no fear, dearest!' replied De Vaux; 'you see they never attempted to murder Manners to-day, though he was there at five or six in the morning, and his purse is likely to be much better filled than mine; and as they knew him, and know me, they must know also that his fortune is larger than mine ever will be.'

'But they may have some motive of revenge against you, Edward,' repeated Marian, contriving to increase her fears most wonderfully, by thinking over them: 'they have evidently some greater knowledge of our situation, and some deeper motive for their conduct, than is apparent: and may they not wish to entrap you for some purpose of revenge?'

'I never injured one of them by word or deed, Marian,' replied De Vaux; 'and if you will consider for a moment, dearest, you will see that they can have no evil intention, at least, towards my person. In the first place, they sent the letter by Manners, and therefore must feel assured that other people will know of my visiting their encampment; and in the next place, this man—this Pharold, leaves the matter open to me to come to him, or to speak with my father on the subject. Had they any design against me, they would have contrived to convey the letter to me secretly, and would have taken care to tell me that I could get the information they offer nowhere but from themselves. Besides, they cannot be sure that I may not make the whole matter public, and come up with half a dozen companions.'

This reasoning calmed Marian de Vaux not a little; but still she was fearful, and could not banish from her mind a kind of foreboding that evil would come of Edward's visit to the gipsy. She knew, however, what absurd things forebodings are; and she felt how natural it was to be anxious and apprehensive for an object in which all her affections centred the moment that a situation of danger presented itself, without seeking for any supernatural inspirations to justify her fears. At every reported movement of the armies during her lover's absence, she had too often felt the same alarm to give any great weight now to the fear she experienced, against the voice of reason and conviction; and seeing that De Vaux had every probability on his side of the argument, she ceased to oppose him by a word.

'At all events, Edward,' she said, 'for my sake do not go unarmed; that precaution cannot be very burdensome.'

'Certainly not,' replied he, 'and I will take my pistols with me with all my heart, as well as

my sword, if it will give you the slightest pleasure, Marian ; though I am sure, my beloved, I shall have to use neither.'

'Well, you shall do it for my sake, Edward,' said Marian ; 'and I think that to know it is so will lighten the weight upon you.'

De Vaux's answer was the precise one which any other man would have made in the same situation ; and some farther conversation ensued of no great import, in the course of which Marian proposed to her cousin to make Colonel Manners the companion of his expedition. She understood fully, however, the objections which, in reply, he urged against imparting to any one but herself a suspicion which so materially affected his station in society, his fortune, and even his happiness ; and those objections having been stated to the reader before, it may be unnecessary to repeat them here. Suffice it to say, that their conversation continued so long that Marian's toilet for the dinner-table was far more hurried than her maid approved. Marian, however—safe in beauty and secure in love—felt that she could go down to dinner, even if a curl or two did stray from its right place ; and there was something in her heart that made her never regret the moments given to Edward de Vaux.

CHAPTER X.

A MIDNIGHT EXPEDITION.

We left Colonel Charles Manners standing at the library door, with his hand upon the great brazen ball, embossed with sundry figures, which served as the handle to the lock. It may be remembered that Colonel Manners, being somewhat troubled with the internal contention between feeling for his friend's uneasiness and wonder for its cause, was seeking an empty room to let those two emotions calm themselves ; but when he turned the above brazen ball, and the door opened to his will, he found that he had been mistaken in looking for solitude there, for the first things he saw were, a very beautiful face, and a pair of bright gay eyes, looking up at him from the other side of the little table on the left hand, with the hat and feathers which it was then customary for ladies to wear in riding, thrown somewhat back from the forehead, so as to show the whole countenance of Isadore Falkland, raising her face with a look of half-laughing vexation, as if asking, 'Who is about to disturb me now, when I came here in search of solitude?'

The interpretation of the expression was so self-evident that Colonel Manners paused with a smile ; and Isadore, finding that her face had told the truth somewhat too plainly, laughed and begged him to come in. 'Nay, Miss Falkland,' said Manners, 'I will not disturb you. Your look, I can assure you, said, *Not at home!* as plain as those words ever were spoken,'—and he took a step back, as if to withdraw.

'The servant made a mistake, then,' replied Isadore ; 'I did not bid him say, Not at home to Colonel Manners. But the truth is, I am endeavouring to compose my mind.'

'Indeed!' he exclaimed, in some surprise, 'I am very sorry to hear that anything has occurred to agitate it.'

'And can *you* say so, Colonel Manners,' asked Isadore, laughing, 'when you yourself were art and part in the deed?'

Manners was still more surprised ; but, as he saw that the agitation of which Miss Falkland complained was of no very serious nature, it only affected him so far as to bring him two steps farther into the room.

'If I am one of the culprits,' he said, approaching nearer the table where Isadore sat enjoying his astonishment,—for hers was one of those light and happy hearts that can win a drop of honey from every flower, however small,—'if I am one of the culprits, I claim the right of an Englishman to hear the charge fairly read, Miss Falkland. Otherwise, I refuse to plead.'

'Well, then, Colonel Manners,' she replied, you stand arraigned of having galloped as fast, when riding with two ladies, as if you had been at the head of your regiment ; and of being art and part with Edward de Vaux in shaking the little brains possessed by one Isadore Falkland out of their proper place. The truth is,' she added, more seriously, 'that after riding very fast, my ideas, which are never in a very composed and tranquil state, get into such a whirl, that I am always obliged to come and read some good book for a quarter of an hour ere I dare venture into rational society. Do you feel the same, Colonel Manners?'

'Not exactly,' answered Manners, smiling, 'but I rather fancy that I am more accustomed to galloping than you are, Miss Falkland ; and that, had you been as much used to that exercise as I have been, during eighteen years' service, you would find your ideas quite as clear, after the longest gallop that ever was ridden, as they were before you set out.'

By this time Colonel Manners had so far carried on his approaches that he was in the midst of the library, the door shut behind him, and a sofa in the window, not very far from Miss Falkland's left hand, with two or three books upon a console hard by—within one step of his position. What Isadore rejoined to his reply matters little. It was just sufficient to seat him on the sofa, with a book in his hand, which he had not the slightest intention of reading ; and a conversation began which, though it had no particular tendency, and was of no particular import, stretched itself over full three quarters of an hour. It was, however, one of those conversations which are the most pleasant that it is possible to imagine—one of those conversations when an intelligent man and an intelligent woman sit down with-

out the intention of talking about anything in particular, and end by talking of everything under the sun. They must, however, feel convinced, like Isadore and Colonel Manners, that there is not the slightest chance on earth of their falling in love with each other; for the least drop of love, or anything like it, changes the whole essence of the thing, and it is no longer conversation. But Isadore and Colonel Manners never dreamt of such a thing; and went on, letting subject run into subject, and thought followed thought, as they liked—not like a regiment of infantry, indeed, advancing in single file, one behind the other, with measured step and stiff demeanour, but like a bevy of rosy children rushing from a schoolroom door, sometimes one at a time, sometimes two or three linked hand in hand together, sometimes half a dozen in a crowd tumbling over one another's shoulders.

The moments flew rapidly till, as we have said, three quarters of an hour had passed as it were a minute; and neither Colonel Manners nor Isadore Falkland would have known that it had passed at all, had not a clock struck in the hall hard by, and Isadore suddenly thought that *somebody*—that great bugbear, *Somebody*—might deem it strange that she sat talking to Colonel Manners alone in the library, while the rest of the family were probably in the drawing-room. She now remembered, also, that she had still her riding-habit to change; and having by this time quite forgotten that Colonel Manners was an ugly man, she made the alteration of her dress an excuse to leave him, though, to speak truth, she broke off their conversation with regret, and felt inclined to look upon the moments she had thus spent as one of the pleasantest things she had yet met with in the garland of time—that garland which begins in buds and blossoms, and ends in blighted flowers and withered leaves.

Manners, for his part,—though he had from the first thought her a very beautiful girl, and a very charming one, too,—had by this time determined that she was possessed of many a more admirable quality of mind and grace of person than he had even believed before; and an involuntary sigh, which broke from his lips when she left him, taught him to feel that it was as well, upon the whole, that he was so soon to take his departure.

When she was gone, he thought for a moment over what had just passed, gave another moment to memories of the long gone, spent two or three more in trifling with the book he held in his hand, and then, after changing his boots in his own room, proceeded to the drawing-room.

Mrs. Falkland was now there alone, but it was not long before Isadore again appeared; and, in a few minutes after, De Vaux, as we have before shown, entered the room for a single instant to inquire for Marian. Neither his aunt nor his cousin perceived that anything had occurred to disturb his equanimity, but the eyes of his friend quickened, perhaps, by what he already knew, discovered without difficulty that the pain which had been given him by the letter he had himself delivered was not at all diminished by reflection; and although he felt that he could ask no questions, he was not a little anxious for the result.

Some time passed ere it was necessary to dress for dinner without anything of importance, either in word or deed, occurring in the drawing-room, except inasmuch as Mrs. Falkland informed Colonel Manners that a lady was to dine with them on that day who had also enjoyed the advantage of his mother's acquaintance in her youth. Isadore pronounced her a foolish, tiresome woman; and Manners, on hearing her name, said he had met her some years before, but did not venture to dissent from Miss Falkland's opinion.

Mrs. Falkland smiled, and tacitly acknowledged that her own judgment of the good lady's qualities was not very different, by saying that she had merely invited her because she knew that she would feel hurt were she to hear that Colonel Manners had been long at Morley House without her having seen him. 'And I never wish to hurt people's feelings, Colonel Manners,' she added, 'unless when it is very necessary indeed.'

'It is never worth while, my dear madam,' replied Manners; 'and I believe that, with little sacrifice of our own comfort, without any sacrifice of sincerity, we can always avoid it, however disagreeable people may be.'

Manners was in the drawing-room amongst the first after dressing, and he looked with some degree of anxiety for the appearance of De Vaux, in order to see whether the tidings he had received still continued to affect him so strongly. But when De Vaux came in, his manner had wholly changed. His conversation with Marian had had the effect which such a conversation might be expected to have. The recollection of it, too, as a whole, while he had been dressing, had done as much as the conversation itself. It had shown him a sweet and consoling result, unmingled with any of the painful feelings to which all he had himself been called upon to communicate, had given rise in his own breast. The gipsy's letter, and the suspicions which it called up, had shaken and agitated him, had taken away the foundations from the hopes and expectations of his whole life; but that which had passed between him and her he loved had re-established all, and fixed the hopes of future happiness on a surer and nobler basis than ever. He trod with a firmer, ay, and with a prouder step, than when he had fancied himself the heir of broad lands and lordships; and when Marian herself soon after entered the room, his face lighted up with a happy glow, like the top of some high hill when it receives the first rays of the morning sun. Marian herself, too, blushed as she appeared, for all the display of her heart's inmost

feelings, which she had that morning made to her lover's eyes, had left a consciousness about her heart—a slight but tremulous agitation, which brought the warm blood glowing into her cheek. There was nothing like unhappiness, however, left in the countenance of either; and Manners became satisfied that whatever had been the contents of the gipsy's letter, the evil effects thereof were passing away.

The Lady Barbara Simpson at length arrived with her husband in her train, and was most tiresomely pleased to see Colonel Manners. She was a worthy dame in the plentitude of ten lustres, in corporeal qualities heavy, and in intellectual ones certainly not light. Vulgarity is, unfortunately, to be found in every rank—*unfortunately*, because, where found in high rank, in which every means and appliance is at hand to remedy it, its appearance argues vulgarity of mind, to which the coarseness of the peasant is comparatively grace. Now Lady Barbara Simpson was of the vulgar great; and, though the blood of all the Howards might have flowed in her veins, the pure and honourable stream would have been choked up by the mental mud of her nature. In her youth no sum or labour had been spared to ornament her mind with those accomplishments and graces which are common in her class: and as music and drawing, and a knowledge of languages, are things which, to a certain degree, may be hung on like a necklace or a bracelet, the mind of Lady Barbara was perfectly well dressed before her parents had done with her education. But nothing could make the mind itself anything but what it was; and the load of accomplishments, which masters of all kinds strove hard to bestow, rested upon it, like jewels on an ugly person, fine things seen to a disadvantage.

During dinner, Manners felt as if he were sitting next to somebody clothed in hair-cloth, which caught his dress at every turn, and scrubbed him whenever he touched it; and his comfort was not greatly increased by finding himself an object of great attention and patronage to Lady Barbara. Opposite to him sat Isadore Falkland; and, though it was certainly a great relief to look in so fair a face, yet there was in it an expression of amused pity for Lady Barbara's martyr that was a little teasing. Her ladyship first descanted enthusiastically upon the beauty of Colonel Manners's mother, and called upon Mrs. Falkland to vouch how very lovely she was. Mrs. Falkland assented as briefly as possible; and Lady Barbara then took wine with Colonel Manners, and declared that there was not the slightest resemblance between him and his mother, examining every feature in his face as she did so to make herself sure of the fact.

At this point of the proceedings Manners was more amused than annoyed; for his own ugliness was no secret to himself, and he therefore knew well that it could be no secret to others. He laughed then at her ladyship's scrutiny, and replied, 'I was once considered very like my mother, Lady Barbara; but whatever resemblance I did possess was carried away by my enemy, the small-pox.'

'Oh, yes,' she cried in return, 'a dreadful disease that! Shocking the ravages it sometimes makes! I see you must have had it very bad.'

'Very bad, indeed, Lady Barbara,' replied Colonel Manners with a laughing glance towards Miss Falkland; 'and, what is worse, I had it at that period of life when one has just learned to value good looks, without having learned to despise them.'

'Oh, terrible!' exclaimed Lady Barbara, really commiserating him; 'it must have made a terrible change in you, indeed. Dear me, what a pity!'

Marian de Vaux was pained for Colonel Manners, and she now interposed with a few words, endeavouring to change the subject; but Lady Barbara was like a hollow square of infantry, and could *faire face partout*, so that poor Marian only drew the fire on herself. Lady Barbara answered her question, and then added, —'And so I hear you are going to be married in a fortnight, Miss de Vaux. Well, I wish you happy, with all my heart; though marriage is always a great risk, God knows; is it not, Mr. Simpson?'

'It is, indeed, my dear,' replied Mr. Simpson, a quiet little man, with much sterling good sense concealed under an insignificant exterior, and with a certain degree of subacid fun in his nature, which was habitually brought forth by the absurdities of his wife, and he finished with an audible and perhaps not unintentional sigh, which gave point to his reply.

'But, for all that, it is a very good, and a very proper state, too,' rejoined Lady Barbara, 'and a very happy one, after all.'

'I am glad you find it so, my dear,' said Mr. Simpson; but Lady Barbara went on, as usual, without attending to her husband.

'I would advise all young people to marry,' she said, 'but not too young, though,'—she herself had married at thirty-five,—'not too young though, for then they only have such large families they do not know what to do with them. But now at a proper age every one ought to marry. Now, Colonel Manners, why are not you married? You ought to have been married before this.'

The reader knows that she was upon dangerous ground; but Manners was too good a politician to show that he was touched; and therefore he determined in reply to put that as a jest, which had a good deal of serious earnestness in it. 'Oh, my dear madam,' he answered, 'you forget I am too ugly; I should never find a wife now.'

'Oh, nonsense, nonsense!' she answered; 'ugliness has nothing to do with it; many a woman will marry the ugliest man in the world sooner than not marry at all; and besides, you ought to have a good fortune, Colonel Manners; and that is a great thing. But, I can tell you,

you will certainly never find a wife, as you say, unless you ask some one.'

The draught was bitter enough; but Manners was indomitable, and answered still gaily, 'Nay, nay, Lady Barbara, I am so diffident of my own merits, and so completely convinced that no one will ever fall in love with my beautiful countenance, that I shall certainly never marry till some lady asks me. It would require that proof, at least, to convince me that I had any chance of being loved.'

'And if any lady were to ask you,' continued the unmerciful Lady Barbara, 'would you really marry her after all, Colonel Manners?'

'I believe I may answer that it would depend upon circumstances,' replied Colonel Manners with a grave smile; 'as, unfortunately for my happiness, your ladyship's marriage has put you out of the question.'

'Oh, do not let me be in the way in the least degree,' rejoined Mr. Simpson from the other side of the table.

De Vaux was fairly driven to a laugh; and Lady Barbara, beginning to find out that there was an error somewhere, paused for a moment, and went on with her dinner.

However skilfully and courageously a man may struggle against his own feelings, on those points where they have intrenched themselves by long habit and possession, yet, when forced by circumstances to treat as a matter of common conversation subjects that are habitually painful to him, there are slight traits—each almost imperceptible, but making something in the aggregate—which will betray what is going on within; sometimes to the eyes of another man, and almost always to those of a woman. A degree of bitterness will mingle with his gaiety; a sigh will sometimes tread upon the heels of a smile; and a deeper gravity will follow the transient, superficial laugh, and distinguish the true from the assumed. Women, by a more refined nature, by a necessity of concealing their own feelings under various disguises, and by the habit of judging others by slight indications, are rendered infinitely more capable of penetrating the veil with which we are often obliged to cover our deeper sentiments. Both Marian De Vaux and Isadore Falkland were at once in Colonel Manners's secret, and comprehended, without difficulty, how much was jest and how much was earnest in his replies to Lady Barbara. Both felt for him, too, and both were sorry for him; and as Marian, in consequence of her generous interposition in his favour, had already suffered somewhat too much by her ladyship's answers touching matrimony, to dare the field again, Isadore entered upon the campaign with greater power, and did her best to effect a diversion. In this she was tolerably successful, though Colonel Manners did not entirely escape; and the ladies retired sooner than usual, in consequence of Mrs. Falkland's desire to support her daughter.

De Vaux, anxious for the following morning, in order that all his doubts might be brought to a conclusion, would willingly have followed the ladies as soon as possible; but, alas! those were days of hard drinking; and Mr. Simpson, though by no means given to excess any more than Manners or De Vaux, had his own peculiar method of consoling himself for his lady's tiresomeness during the day, by sitting long in the evening, with the sparkling decanters and the social biscuits, by which he was sure neither to be annoyed nor contradicted. He drank his wine slowly, and with real enjoyment, pausing over every sip as a miser over every guinea, playing with the stalk of his wine-glass, saying little smart things, if he had any one to hear him, and if he had not, gazing in the fire and diversifying pleasant thoughts by discovering landscapes and faces therein.

De Vaux, without any want of charity, wished every glass his last, and Colonel Manners wished himself in the drawing-room: but the *leges conviviales* of those days were more strict than in these degenerate times; and as the party was so small, both felt themselves obliged to sit ceremoniously at table, till suddenly Mr. Simpson perceived that neither of his companions had touched wine for half-an-hour, and kindly took the hint. It was now near ten o'clock; Lady Barbara had far to go, and was compassionate towards the four bright bays that were ordered at that hour; and thus Colonel Manners was spared the execution of all the manœuvres he had planned to get out of her way in the drawing-room. The carriage was announced; De Vaux handed her downstairs; and a glad sound it was when the wheels rolled away from the door.

There are many people whose disagreeableness is of that peculiar kind that one can compensate the annoyance it occasions at the time, by laughing at it with one's friends when it is over; but, unfortunately, Lady Barbara's was of so extensive and tenacious a quality that it outlasted her presence; and Mrs. Falkland, Isadore, and Marian, all found that they could not talk of it in Colonel Manners's presence without being as disagreeable as herself. As Marian, too, had no inclination to converse upon the risks of matrimony and large families, she was cut off from mentioning her share in the annoyance; and after a quarter of an hour spent in determining, in general terms, that Lady Barbara Simpson was a very disagreeable person, the family returned to its usual course. Marian was a little anxious about Edward's proposed excursion of the next morning; De Vaux himself was thoughtful in regard to the conduct he was to pursue towards the gipsy; and as if by mutual consent, the whole party separated sooner than usual.

We have not, however, done with the events of that night, and, consequently, we shall follow De Vaux to his room, where he rang his bell; and on the appearance of his servant, suffered him to give him his dressing-gown and slippers. 'You need not wait, William,' he said, when

this operation was concluded; 'I have something to write—give me that desk.'

The man obeyed and retired, and De Vaux proceeded to put down some notes in regard to what he was to demand of the gipsy, and what was to be the exact course he was to pursue, in order—without admitting any fact till it was proved, or committing himself in any way—to arrive both at the most accurate knowledge of his real situation, and the most incontestable proofs of whatever was affirmed by the man he went to visit.

When he had done this, he thought of going to bed; but his head ached a good deal, with all the agitation he had gone through during the day, crowned by the conversation of Lady Barbara Simpson during dinner, and the tedium of Mr. Simpson after it; and approaching one of the windows, he drew the curtain, opened the shutters, and looked out. It was still moonlight, as when he had handed her ladyship to her carriage; and throwing up the heavy sash, he leaned out, enjoying the cool air. The moon was just at her highest noon, and the sky was beautifully clear, except inasmuch as, every now and then, there floated across a light white cloud, which the wind seemed playfully to cast round the planet, like a veil, as she walked on in soft and modest splendour, amongst the bright eyes of all the crowd of stars. The river, gleaming like melted silver, appeared at the extremity of the park, with the line of its banks broken here and there by majestic elms; and even beyond the grounds, glimpses of its windings might be caught among the distant fields and plantations. The little wooded promontory that flanked the park, with the higher hill, starting up from the isthmus over which the road passed, rose grandly up, like two towering steps, towards the glittering heavens; and beyond, the sloping fields and their hedgerow elms, with many an undulating line, lay soft and obscure, in the sheeny moonlight, as far as a spot where, half way up the higher hill in front, the extreme horizontal line of the distant country cut upon the sky. Scarce a sound was to be heard as De Vaux gazed forth, but the whispering of the light breeze amongst the tree tops, and the sweet plaintive belling of the deer in the park below.

'If I had known that these people would have gone so soon,' he thought, 'I would have made my visit to the gipsies' encampment to-night instead of to-morrow. The gipsies sit up, carousing by their fires, I believe, for full one half of the night; and I might have set my mind at rest about this business without waiting so long.'

The thought of going even then now struck him; and he paused for a few minutes to consider whether he ought to do so or not. 'I shall not sleep, even if I go to bed, he thought. 'With all these things weighing on my mind, slumber is not very likely to visit me. A couple of hours will be enough to obtain all the information that I want; and returning home, I may sleep in certainty to-night, and to-morrow have to tell Marian that my apprehensions were groundless, or that our lot, as far as station and fortune go, must be lower than we at one time expected. I shall then have time, too, to sleep over my information, and to lay out my plan of action for to-morrow deliberately. I wonder if any of the servants are up yet?'

The fears that Marian had expressed for his safety crossed his mind for a moment; but they crossed it merely as apprehensions, which might have given her some pain, if she knew that he was venturing to the gipsies' encampment at midnight. No doubt of his own security ever entered his thoughts; for, although De Vaux's imagination was a very active one, it was not fertile in images of personal danger. In short, he was constitutionally brave; and, like his father, did not know what corporeal fear is. 'I shall only have to tell Marian,' he again thought, 'that I have been, and that all she was alarmed about is over.'

He gave one more look to the moonlight and then closed his window. His boots were speedily drawn on; his dressing-gown exchanged for a military coat; his sword buckled to his side; and, in conformity with his promise to Marian, a brace of loaded pistols placed in his bosom. Thus equipped, he opened his door and descended the staircase. All was quiet; the lamp in the hall was still glimmering, though somewhat faintly; the servants were all evidently in bed; and turning the key in the glass door at the end of the lobby, De Vaux opened it cautiously, and stepped out upon the lawn.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GIPSY ENCAMPMENT.

THE moon was shining bright and clear upon Morley Down, covering every rise on which its beams fell with soft and silvery light, and casting every dell and opposite slope into dark broad shadow. From that height a slight degree of mistiness appeared, hanging over the scene in the valley: but above, all was clear; and the satellite of the earth was so bountiful of her reflected rays, that our fellow-stars could scarcely be seen in the sky, twinkling faintly, half eclipsed by her excess of splendour. The scattered bushes and stunted hawthorns, and the tumulus, with its clump of towering beeches, caught the rays, but, with the peculiar effect of trees by moonlight, the latter seemed more to absorb than to reflect the light, while their long deep shadows, cast upon the neighbouring ground, showed, at least, that they served to intercept the beams. In many of the little pits and hollows of the ground small pools of water had been formed; and so often did these appear, glistening in the moonshine, in situations otherwise dark, that it seemed as if the light sought out purposely the objects best

calculated to reflect it, and, like active benevolence in search of humble merit, followed them into the dim and lowly abodes where they had made their dwelling.

From these pools, however, the sand-pit in which the gipsies had pitched their tents was free; and the only water it contained was afforded by a small clear spring, which the labourers had cut through in digging for the produce of the pit, and which, welling from the bank, fell into a clear small basin of yellow sand that would, in all probability, have absorbed it speedily, had it not found a sudden channel amongst some smooth stones and gravel, and thence wound away, forced into a thousand meanders by the irregularity of the ground, till, issuing forth upon the common, it pursued its course down the hill, and, joined by several other brooks, poured no inconsiderable addition into the river in the valley below. It, too, caught the moonbeams, and glanced brightly in them; but that was not the only light that shone upon it, as it trickled down the bank, and rested in its little basin below. A redder and less pure gleam was reflected from its waters, for at about twenty yards from the source, close under shelter of the high bank and overhanging bushes, the gipsies had pitched their tents; and now, though the hour was nearly midnight, they were just in the midst of those revels that often rise up from many a moor and many a planting throughout old England, while the rest of her denizens are fast asleep. The evening was as warm as if it had been far earlier in the year; and although the wind was high, it whistled sheer over the pit, without visiting with its rude search the corner thereof in which the race of wanderers had nested their encampment. The very sound, however, and the freshness of the night air, rendered the idea of a fire anything but unpleasant; and in three different spots of the gipsy encampment the blaze rose up, and the sticks crackled, while the pots now withdrawn from the flame, the bottles of various shapes that lay round, and the cups, some of tin, some of horn, some of silver*, that circulated somewhat rapidly, told that the last and merriest meal of the day had commenced.

Three several groups had assembled round the three fires, and each had its peculiar character. At that which burned in the middle of the scene appeared Pharold, leaning upon the ground, with his elbow supported by a projection of the bank, with a middle-aged woman on one side, and the beautiful girl we have before mentioned on the other. Two or three stout men, of from forty to fifty years, surrounded him; and though joining boldly and freely in all that passed, it was evident that they listened to him when he spoke with the respect due to experience and command, and without any of that sullenness which we have noticed in some of the younger members of the tribe who were with him in the forest. Some more women completed that group; and, though merry enough, it was evident, by their demeanour, that there sat the elders of the tribe. The next fire, at the door of a tent farther up the pit, was surrounded by a different assemblage, though it was in some degree mixed. At the entrance of the little hut itself appeared the beldame whom we have seen acting as cook in the forest, and who on that occasion had shown some inclination towards a resistance of Pharold's authority. Round about her were five or six sturdy young men, from five and twenty to thirty, and five or six women; two of whom did not appear to be more than eighteen or nineteen years of age, while the rest were fine buxom brown dames of thirty-five or six. The worthy lady of the hut, however, seemed now to have lost her acerbity; and in a gay and jovial mood, with many a quip and many a jest, kept all her younger auditors in a roar; though every now and then, with a curl of the lip, and a winking eye, she glanced towards the party at the other fire, as if their graver conversation was the subject of her merry sarcasm.

At the third fire appeared the younger part of the tribe, the boys and girls of all ages, except those, indeed, who rested sleeping in the huts; and this circle,—the loud laughter and broad jokes of which were sometimes checkered by the sounds of contention and affray, occasioned by an old pack of cards,—was presided over by a handsome youth of about nineteen or twenty, whose proper place would have been, apparently, at the second fire. He was here, however, placed much nearer to the first group; and this proximity gave him, every now and then, an opportunity—in the intervals of teasing his younger comrades—of looking over his shoulder at the beautiful girl we have called Lena, who, as we have said, was leaning beside Pharold, and listening with seeming attention to his discourse.

The whole three fires had assembled round them a much greater number of the gipsy race than had been congregated in the wood where we first saw them; and, in truth, a very formidable party was there gathered together, who might have given not a little difficulty, and offered—should their need have required it—no insignificant resistance, either to gamekeepers, constables, or police officers. Fourteen stout men, in their prime of strength, with nine or ten boys capable of very efficient service, were there met together, as well as a number of women, whose arms were of no insignificant weight, and whose tongues might have been more formidable still.

* It is a peculiar trait in the character of the gipsies, remarked, I believe, in every country where they are to be found, that each individual strives to possess himself of something formed of one of the precious metals, denying himself even necessaries to procure it, and guarding it with a degree of care which the race extend to few other things. By some writers it is asserted that these cups, or ornaments, or other articles found of gold or silver, descend from generation to generation, and are never parted with except under circumstances of the greatest necessity.

As it may be necessary, for various reasons, to afford a sample of the sort of conversation which was taking place amongst the gipsies on that night, we shall begin, on many accounts, with the second fire, round which it appeared that a liquor, which smelt very like rum, had been circulating with no retarded movements.

'Take it easy, take it easy, Dickon, my chick,' said the old dame, of whom we have already spoken, addressing one of the sturdy young vagabonds by whom she was surrounded; 'never let's kick up a row among ourselves, do you see. That's the right way to bring the beaks upon us. He's a king of a fellow, too, that Pharold, though he do sometimes look at one, when he's angry, as if the words were too big for his throat,—just as I've seen a fat cock turkey, when I've been nimming him off the perch, and got him tight round the neck with both my hands to stop his gabbling.' The simile seemed to tickle the fancy of her auditors, who interrupted her by a roar, which soon, however, died away, and she proceeded. 'He's a king of a fellow, though, and it wouldn't do to make a split; besides, he knows more than common, and the law's again it, too; so take it easy, Dickon, and I'll put you up to a thing or two.'

'Ay, do, mother, there's a good soul!' replied the young man. 'Do you see, I don't want to split with Pharold; but damn me if I go out shooting at rabbits, and hares, and little devils like that, if I am to give my word that I won't touch a deer if it comes across me.'

'No, no, Dickie, never you meddle with nobody's dear,' said the old woman; 'though Bill there, at the other fire,' she added, dropping her voice a little, and grinning significantly, 'though Bill there, at the other fire, seems to have a great fancy for Pharold's own dear.' A low laugh, whose suppressed tone argued that every one felt themselves on dangerous ground, followed her jest, and she went on. 'But howsomdever, Dick, never you meddle with nobody's deer when you are bid not—till the person that bade you is out of the way—do you see? eh, Dicky, my boy?'

'Ay, that's something like now, Mother Gray,' replied Dickon. 'Do you see, to-morrow, it seems, we must troop, half one way, and half t'other; and then, if I be not sent to a distance, and can get some good fellows to help me, I'll bet a bob that I bring home two or three as fat bucks as ever laid their haunches on the King's table—and that's a better night's work than ever Pharold will do.'

'Well, well, Dickon, you shall do it,' replied the old dame. 'You wait quiet till to-morrow, and seem to think no more about it, and I will get Lena to wheedle Pharold out of the way—if some of his own strange jobs do not take him without; and you shall have free scope and fair play for a night, my boy, any how—so the keepers may count their deer the next morning if they can.'

'But suppose I am sent away,' said the young man; 'I would rather have gone to-night by half.'

'But you know you can't, Dickon,' she replied; 'and it would only make a row to speak about it. We only go ten miles, any of us, and I will take care of your ten miles, my chick. So keep snug; and, do you see, there's no use of bringing up the deer to where we pitch. The shiners are what we want; and Harry Saxon, who bags the pheasants and hares, and who first gave me an inkling about the venison, will take the beasts of us for so much a head, and send them up to the Lord Mayor in London. So to-morrow I will be off early, and get the job arranged properly, and have a cart and horse ready, do you see, Dickon?'

Dickon rubbed his hands with much glee; and as it would seem that some people are born to deer-stealing, he felt that satisfaction which all men must feel when a prospect opens before them of their talents at length having a free course. At that moment, however, two shots were heard at no very great distance, but in the direction of the little wooded promontory near Morley House, and the sound called forth some symptoms of emotion in more than one of the party. Pharold listened, drew in his eyes, and knit his brows hard, while Dickon vowed with an oath, 'That fellow Hallet has gone down into Mrs. Falkland's preserves, and will blow us all with his cursed gun. He might have waited an hour or two.'

Pharold listened still, but made no comment, and those by whom he was surrounded seemed to suspend their own observations on the sound till his were spoken. In the meantime, Dickon and the good dame, whom he termed Mother Gray, proceeded with the edifying arrangements they had been making, and had nearly completed their plan for getting Pharold out of the way, stealing two or three deer from some of the neighbouring grounds, and sending them up to the capital to supply his Majesty's burgher lieges in their necessity for fat venison. The exact park which they were to plunder, and some other of the minor considerations, were undergoing discussion, in which the whole party round the fire took a friendly and zealous share, when one of Dickon's comrades, who had been keeping an eye on Pharold's circle, touched him on the shoulder, saying, 'They are going to divide the money.'

'They will not have so much to divide as we shall get to-morrow,' said Dickon; 'I will answer for that.'

'I don't know, I don't know, my chick,' rejoined the worthy beldame; 'that Pharold is a knowing hand, and always gets more than any one else, work for it how they will. How he gets it, I am sure I don't know, and I often think he must coin his skin into guineas, for my part.'

Now the complexion of the old dame herself, and of everyone round her, was as yellow as anyone could desire; but that did not prevent

them all from enjoying the joke highly, simply, perhaps, because Pharold's countenance might be a little brighter in hue than their own. Several of them, however, now rose and approached the other fire, at which the proposed division of gains was about to take place; for it seemed that the tribe in question had retained many of the original habits of their people which have been lost amongst other hordes. One after another, till the turn came to Pharold, the several gipsies poured forth their acquisitions into this general fund. Silver and copper were the principal metals that appeared in the collection, though a few pieces of gold, consisting in general of coins of the value of seven shillings or half a guinea sparkled between. The numbers who contributed, however, and the copious contributions of small coin that some of them poured forth, gave the whole sum an imposing amount. But when Pharold at length received the hat in which it was collected, and drawing forth an old purse, added between thirty and forty golden pieces to the store, a murmur of joy and satisfaction ran through the assembled gipsies.

The partition next began; but it was not, as may be supposed, perfectly equal. It was perfectly just, however: each received according to the burdens upon him. The married man obtained a share double in amount that bestowed upon the single man; the mother of a large family, even if her husband was no more, claimed in proportion to the number of her offspring, and each orphan—of which, be it remarked, by one cause or another, there were several—was treated as a single man. The partition was made by Pharold himself with rigorous equity; and though almost all the gipsies had gathered round, and observed his proceedings with gleaming black eyes and eager faces, none offered a word either of remonstrance or of information, for all were not only convinced of his justice, but every one would have felt shame to grumble at the award of one who, contributing more than the whole together, only claimed the share of an individual.

When he had done, and the whole was distributed, Pharold addressed a few words to his companions, such as the division which had just taken place suggested. He told them that in this custom, as in all the others which they themselves observed, they followed exactly the manners of their fathers; and he praised, not without eloquence, the sort of patriarchal state in which they lived. He lamented grievously, however, that many of their nation were abandoning their ancient habits; that some had even established themselves in fixed dwelling-places, had submitted themselves to the laws, and had adopted the manners of the people amongst whom they dwelt. He besought those who surrounded him to live as all their race had lived, and promised that thus they would continue to be as prosperous as the division of that night showed them to be at present.

'A curse upon our children!' cried one middle-aged woman, 'if they quit the ways of their fathers, and go to live among the puny white-faced things of the lands. A curse upon them all. May their line of life be crooked and broken off in the middle, full of crosses, and ending in *Gehennel!*'

A murmur of approbation followed this denunciation, and the rest of the gipsies retiring to their several fires, their carousings were renewed, while Pharold related to those who more particularly surrounded him, a variety of melancholy facts relative to the degeneracy of various gipsy tribes, who had fallen into the iniquity of fixed dwelling-places, and many other abominations. He spoke of much that he had seen in his own wanderings, and much that he had heard from others; and his story became so interesting that a good many of the younger of the race crept round to listen. This, however, did not seem to suit his purpose, for he speedily broke off his discourse, and looking round him, exclaimed in a voice loud enough to be heard at each of the neighbouring fires,—'Come, my men, we are sad to-night, and that must not be. Will,' he added, speaking to the young man who, as we have said, presided over the younger circle,—'Will, you are a songster, let us hear your voice.'

William obeyed without hesitation, and while he went on with his song, the old dame at the other fire continued conversing eagerly with her favourite Dickon, in tones which were low in themselves, and which were the better cut off from other ears by the rich, fine voice of the singer.

SONG.

In the grey of the dawn, when the moon has gone down,
Ere the sun has got up, over country and town,
'Tis the time for the lover to steal to his dear,
In the heart-beating May of the incoming year.
CHORUS—In the grey of the dawn, &c

In the grey of the dawn, when the fox is asleep,
And the foxes of cities in slumber are deep,
'Tis the time for the wise from his tent to walk out,
And to see what the rest of the world is about.
In the grey of the dawn, &c.

In the grey of the dawn, ere the milkmaid trips by,
To bring home the milk from the bright-coated kye,
Some earlier hand may have taken the pain,
To render her milking all labour in vain.
In the grey of the dawn, &c

In the grey of the dawn, if you'll meet me down by,
My own pretty maid with the dark gleaming eye,
We'll wander away far o'er mountain and plain,
And leave the old fools to look for us in vain.
In the grey of the dawn, &c

In the grey of the dawn, if you'll not come to me,
My own pretty maid, by the green hawthorn tree,
You may stumble by chance o'er the corpse of your love,
As you trip with some other along the dim grove.
In the grey of the dawn, &c.

'You have changed the song, Will,' said Pharold, as the other ended; 'you have added and taken away.'

The young man reddened, but merely replied that he had forgot some verses, and been

obliged to put new ones; and Pharold, taking no further notice, continued his conversation with his companions. In the meantime, the consultation between the old lady and Dickon had gone on throughout the song, and was still continued.

'Well, well, Dickon, my boy,' rejoined the old lady to something that her companion had said under cover of the singing, 'keep a good tongue in your head for a while, and we'll see what we can make of it. It is a shame, indeed, that he should have his own way of getting so much stuff, no one knows how—from the *Spirit*, I think—and prevent you from following your way of getting some too, specially when it's all to go with the rest. And he's proud of his way of getting money, too. Did you see with what an air he poured the shiners in?'

'That I did, that I did,' replied the other; 'curse him! I'd get as many as he if he'd let me.'

'Ay, but you see the thing is, Dick,' she answered, 'he gets it no one knows how, without ever saying a word about it to any one. Now, you follow the same plan, my chick; and if he asks you, you can then tell him to mind his own business. But hush, he's looking at us. Bid Bill give us another stave.'

'Bill,' cried Dickon, 'give us another touch of it, there's a good 'un. Sing us Old Dobbin, and then come here and take a swig of the bingo with me and Mother Gray.'

Bill was not at all reluctant, and without the slightest appearance of bashful hesitation, again began to pour forth his fine voice in song. The air, however, was of a very different kind, as far as expression went, from that which he had formerly chosen, which had been somewhat more sentimental and solemn than the words in general required, or than might have been expected from the personage by whom it was sung. In the present case, his tones were all lively, and the song seemed well known to all his companions.

SONG.

1.

Lift your head, Robin,
Lift it and see,
Why shakes his bells, Dobbin,
Under the tree?
Why shakes his bells, Dobbin,
His old noddle bobbing,
As if there were strangers upon the green lea?

2.

Lie quiet, lie quiet,
Though danger be near,
If we make not a riot
There's nothing to fear.
If you will but try it,
And only lie quiet,
There is no harm will happen, my own little dear.

3.

I have heard of the fairy
That walks in the night,
With a figure so airy,
And fingers so light,
That though watch-dogs hairy,
May sleep in the airy,
She will empty your hen-coops before morning light.

4.

I have heard of the witches
That ride in the dark,
And despite hedge and ditches
Get into the park;
Nim hares from their niches,
Without any hitches,
And think man-traps and spring-guns a toothless dog's bark.

5.

Then lift your head, Robin,
Lift it to find
Why the bells of old Dobbin
Sound on the night wind.
Then lift your head, Robin,
For my heart is throbbing,
About witches and fairies and things of the kind.

6.

Lie still, 'tis no fairy
That trips the green sod,
To hen-coop or dairy
No witch takes her road,
No, no! 'tis no fairy,
Nor anything airy;
Lie still and be silent, the *beaks* are abroad!

This very edifying composition seemed to give infinitely greater satisfaction to the generality of the gipsies than the former song had done, and especially in those places where the singer contrived to modulate his voice so as to change the tone from the male to the female, or from the female to the male, as the words required. The approbation of his hearers was loud and vehement. Pharold alone appeared somewhat gloomy upon the occasion, and were one to look into his breast, which we do not intend to do very deeply on this occasion, one might see a strange and bitter contest between early feelings, habits, and inclinations, and refinements and tastes acquired from the most opposite sources—a state of things so discordant in all their elements that nothing but an originally wild and eccentric nature could have endured its existence in the same bosom. Some one has said, '*Malheureux celui qui est en avant de son siècle;*' and it certainly might be said in every class of society, '*Malheureux celui qui est au-dessus de son état.*' Pharold then became gloomy, and felt disgusted at things which amused and interested his companions; nor, perhaps, was his gloom decreased by seeing that the beautiful young companion who leaned beside him was as much pleased and amused as the rest.

'I thought that I had taught you to despise such things, Lena,' he said, in a low tone, and with somewhat of a frowning brow.

'Yes, yes,' she replied, colouring brightly; 'and so I do, when I think—but yet——'

She was interrupted by the man named Dickon, who gave a low whistle, and exclaimed at the same time, repeating a part of his companion's song—

Lift your head, Robin,
Lift it and see,
Why shakes his bells, Dobbin,
Under the tree?

And almost at the same moment, one of the

horses, of which the gipsies had several feeding upon the common just above, repeated a low neigh which had been heard, in the first instance, by Dickon, as he was called, alone. All was instantly silent ; and then the jumping sort of noise which a horse with a clog upon his feet makes when endeavouring to go fast, was heard from the common ; and Pharold's practised ear could also distinguish, proceeding from the gravel of the road, the sound of a man's footstep, the near approach of which had probably frightened the horse.

'Jump up, Will,' he cried quickly, addressing the singer ; 'jump up and see who it is. Stop him up there. If he want me, whistle twice ; if you want help, whistle once.'

The young man was up the bank in a moment ; but the length of time that elapsed before they heard any farther sound made them at first fancy that they had been mistaken in thinking that anyone approached, and then showed them that in the clear silence of the night the sounds had made themselves heard farther than they had at first imagined. All kept a profound silence ; but, after the lapse of about a minute, the murmur of distant voices was distinguished, and then came a low long whistle. Every one started on his feet, but the next moment a second whistle was heard, and Pharold said calmly, 'It is for me ! I may be absent, perhaps, for an hour or so : but as the young man has come to-night instead of to-morrow, we will set off all the earlier in the morning.'

He spoke to one of the elder men near him, but in a tone of voice loud enough to be heard by those around. Dickon and Mother Gray gave each other a look ; and when Pharold slowly took his way up the bank, she stuck her tongue in her toothless cheek with very little of that reverence in her looks which she sometimes professed for the leader of the tribe.

Soon after he was gone, the young man called Will returned, and was questioned by several of the gipsies regarding the stranger who had intruded upon them at so late an hour. All that he could or would reply was that he was a young fellow with a sword by his side, and that he had walked away with Pharold ; with which tidings they were forced to content themselves, and their revels went on and concluded much as they had begun.

CHAPTER XII.

A TERRIBLE REVELATION.

LET anyone who is fond of sublime sensations take his hat and staff, and climb a high hill by a moonlight midnight. There is a part of that dust of earth, which gathers so sadly upon our spirit during our daily commune with this sordid world, cast off at every step. The very act of climbing has something ennobling in it, and the clearer air we breathe, the elevation to which we rise, all gives the mind a sensation of power and lightness, as if it had partly shaken off the load of clay that weighs it down to the ground.

The cool night air playing round his brow calmed the feverish headache which anxiety and excitement had left upon Edward de Vaux ; and as he walked forth from the park, and climbed the high hill towards Morley Down, with the stars looking at him from the clear heaven, and the moon glistening on every pebble of his path, it is wonderful how much his mind felt soothed and tranquillised, how small the cares of earth became in his sight. So much so, indeed, was this the case, that although, as he mounted the steep ascent, he heard distinctly two several shots fired, apparently, a great deal too near his aunt's preserves—a sound which, at any other time, might have roused his indignation in a very superabundant degree—he now only paused for a moment, and turned round to listen, and hearing no more, walked on, regarding the destruction of some hares or pheasants as a matter of but small consequence. When he reached the common, the beauty of the moonlight scene, with its broad lights and shadows, and the solemn effect of silence, and solitude, and night, again made him halt in his advance to gaze upwards into the depth, and feel the mightiness of the universe around him ; and that, too, sunk all human cares so low by comparison, that he began to think he could bear any disclosure with calm tranquillity.

He then walked on rapidly, regretting, perhaps, a little, that he had not asked Manners the exact position of the gipsy encampment, as he had become warm in climbing the hill, and the wind that blew over the common felt chill and made a slight shudder pass over him. The little mound, however, was his resource, as it had been that of his friend when engaged on a similar errand ; and, walking on to the spot where it stood, he climbed the side, and cast his eyes over the wide and broken flat grounds below him. In the direction of the sand-pit, he almost immediately beheld a light ; and the next instant a fine mellow voice singing showed him that the gipsies were not only there but awake, though he was too far off to catch any thing but a few detached notes of a merry air rising up from below. Turning his steps in that direction, he had proceeded about a quarter of the way from the mound to the encampment, when an old white horse, which had lain down after feeding, started up at his approach, and hobbled away with its clogged feet, as fast as it could, uttering, at the same time, one or two short neighs, as if perfectly aware that its masters were of that class which does not like to be interrupted without warning. The light of the fire, now rising up above the abrupt edge of the sand-pit, and showing the dark outline of the bank, with the few black bushes cutting sharp upon the glare, pointed out to De Vaux

the exact spot where the gipsies were to be found, when suddenly a human figure was seen rising rapidly across the light; and a minute or two after the form of a stout youth planted itself directly in the way of the wanderer.

'Who do you want, and what?' demanded the young man, eying him from head to foot with a look of no particular satisfaction.

De Vaux, however, answered him at once in such a manner as to put a stop to any further inquiries, saying, 'I want to see a person called Pharold, who is with you here. Can you bring me to him?'

'No,' replied the youth, 'but I can bring him to you;' and he uttered a low, long whistle, succeeded by another, which was quickly followed by the appearance of Pharold himself, who, as he approached, took care to examine his visitor as accurately as the moonlight would permit. When he came near, without addressing De Vaux, or waiting to hear his errand, he turned to the young man, saying, 'You may return, William;' and seeing a slight inclination to linger, he added, in a more authoritative tone, 'Return!'

The youth obeyed; and then turning to his visitor the gipsy said, 'you are Captain de Vaux, I suppose—nay, I see you are.'

'You are right,' replied De Vaux; 'though I am not aware that you ever saw me before; at least, I am certain that I never saw you.'

'I saw you on the day before yesterday,' replied the gipsy, 'though it was but for a moment, and you did not see me. But it is not alone from that I know you. You are very like your father, as I remember him; but still more like your grandfather and your uncle, in the times when I can recall as happy a set of faces in Dimden Hall as ever shone in the palace or the cottage.'

The gipsy sighed as he spoke, and De Vaux sighed too, for he had never seen such faces in his father's house; and there was also, in the picture thus presented, a sad sample of how happy things and scenes of joy can, in a few short years, pass away and be forgotten, which, linking itself by the chain of association to the present, carried on his mind to the time when he and his might be as those of whom the gipsy spoke, and all the happiness which he now so fondly anticipated with her he loved become a memory for some old remaining servant, or poor dependant, to sigh over in their age.

'Then I am to suppose,' rejoined De Vaux, after pausing for a moment on thoughts which, perhaps, might be called gloomy,—'then I am to suppose that I am speaking with the person signing himself Pharold; and I may also conclude,' he added, 'that he is the same whom I have heard of, as having been taken, when a boy, by my grandfather, in order to educate him with my father and uncle; but who could not bear the restraints of that kind of life, and at the end of two years fled back to his own race and his native pursuits.'

'In less time, in less time than that,' said the gipsy; 'but I often went back, and was ever kindly met, and used to please myself by enacting one day the young gentleman at the hall, and the next the gipsy on the common. But after a time,' he continued, carried away by his subject, 'I strayed farther, and forgot what I might have been, to give myself more up to what I was to be—but there is no use of talking of such things now, it makes me sad! And so you have heard all that? Yet who would tell you? Your father never did, I am sure; and your aunt was then but a child of two or three years old; and your uncle—but you remember not him.'

'No,' replied De Vaux, 'any knowledge of the facts that I do possess was derived, I believe, from the tales of an excellent old housekeeper, who died not many years ago, and who seemed to speak of Pharold with no small regard.'

'And is she dead?' cried Pharold. 'Poor good old Mrs. Dickinson—I knew not that she was dead—she was ever kind to me, good soul: and now she is dust and ashes! Well, well, the fairest, and the strongest, and the best, go down to the sand with the leaves of the tree!—but will the kindly affections, and the noble feelings, and the generous nature, die too and rot? Can you tell me that, young gentleman?—I think not.'

'Nor I either,' answered De Vaux. 'God forbid that we should think so! But, as I said, it was from that good old person, as I now recollect, that I heard all I know of your former history.'

De Vaux recurred to the subject of the old housekeeper purposely, for he was not at all sorry that their conversation had taken such a turn as to draw forth the man's true character, and to show the deeper motives upon which he acted. Anxious as he might naturally be to ascertain whether there was any hidden passion which might tempt the other to deceive him, or to seek to injure either himself or those connected with him, De Vaux would fain have led the gipsy on to speak more fully of the past; but Pharold's mind, following always its own particular train, rested but for a moment longer upon the idea suggested, and then returned abruptly to the cause of their meeting.

'Since you know so much of me, Captain de Vaux,' he said, 'you must also know that I possess knowledge in regard to your family which few other persons now living do possess; and you must know, likewise, that I am not one to say to you a word that is false, or to seek to wrong you by even a thought. That you have given some credence to my letter I see by your having come here; and that you put some confidence in me, I see by your having come alone, and at this hour. Both deserve that I should be as explicit with you as possible; and, therefore, before you quit me, I will leave not a doubt upon your mind in regard to the truth of what I affirm.'

'By so doing,' replied De Vaux, 'you will

at least entitle yourself to my gratitude and thanks, though I conceal not from you that it is difficult to feel grateful, or to offer sincere thanks, to one who, willingly or unwillingly, overturns our hopes and our happiness for ever.'

'It is difficult!' replied the gipsy; 'but yet you must believe me when I tell you that I feel deeply and bitterly every pang that I inflict on you—that but for a duty and a promise registered in my own heart and beyond the stars—but for your own ultimate happiness—I would not pour upon you now all that I must bid you bear. You must believe all this, Captain de Vaux, for it is true.'

And De Vaux did believe it, in part if not entirely; for there was a solemn earnestness about the man's manner, a sort of eager deprecation in his tone, that would have been very difficult to assume unfelt. Although his opinion of mankind in general, and of the gipsy race in particular, was not very high, still the barrier of distrust was not strong enough to shut out conviction when De Vaux heard the tones of real sincerity; and he spoke truly when he replied, 'I will believe that you do feel what you say, both because I have never, to my knowledge, injured you or yours, so that it would be gratuitous baseness to injure or afflict me; and because the little I have ever heard of your character in youth, as well as your tone and manner at present, convinces me that you are incapable of such a proceeding. Nevertheless, you must remember, that before I can yield belief to any part of a story which, in some way, must throw dark imputations upon my family, I am bound to exact proof, and must be permitted to question every assertion that is not supported by the fullest evidence.'

'Proof and evidence you shall have,' replied the gipsy; 'and you shall not only be permitted to question anything that seems doubtful, but to be angry and indignant till you are convinced. Only, for your own sake, command yourself as much as possible. Remember that you have to hear a tale that will give you great pain; and in order to enable yourself to judge rationally of its truth, you must govern your passions, and, as far as may be, subdue your feelings. You must promise, too, Captain de Vaux, to forgive him who inflicts the truth upon you. Will you promise me,' he asked, laying his hand solemnly on De Vaux's arm, 'to forgive whatever pain I may inflict, when you shall be satisfied both that my tale is true, and that I have no motive of earthly interest in relating it?'

'Most certainly,' replied De Vaux, 'though you proved my illegitimacy ever so clearly. Of course I must forgive you, if disinterestedly you speak but the truth.'

'Worse, worse—far worse than that have I to tell,' replied the gipsy; 'but I cannot tell it here. The wind blows cold, and I saw you shudder, but your blood will run colder still before my tale is done. Besides, my people have long hearing and cunning ways. They are too near; and I would not that any other ear than yours, in the whole world, should listen to the words I am going to speak. You have trusted yourself so far to-night that you will not fear to trust yourself alone with me still farther. Come, then, with me to the edge of the wood, that you see lying there, about half a mile off. There we can shelter ourselves from the wind beneath the part of the bank just where it looks down upon the road. You are nearer home there, too.'

'I know I am,' answered De Vaux, turning, and gazing somewhat fixedly upon him; 'but do you know that the road which it does overhang is within a hundred yards of the spot where my uncle was murdered?'

'I know it well,' replied the gipsy; 'but you will never be murdered like him, Captain de Vaux.'

'And why not?' said De Vaux, quickly. 'What happened to him may happen to me.'

'My story must explain my words,' rejoined Pharold; 'I am unarmed—you are armed. All my comrades are there behind us—I go farther from them, and lead you nearer to your home. Were I willing to injure you, here were the place.'

'Lead on, lead on!' said De Vaux; 'I will trust you, and follow you.'

Without reply, the gipsy led the way across the common, with every step of which he seemed so well acquainted as to be able to shape his course, amidst all the breaks, and bushes, and irregularities of the ground, without ever giving a glance to the right or the left. He said not a word either, and De Vaux followed equally in silence, with his interest and anxiety still more excited than they had been even by his strange companion's letter. In less than a quarter of an hour they had crossed that part of the common which lay between the sand-pit and the edge of the wood, exactly at that point where the hill, of which Morley Down formed the table land, joined on to the general chain of hills, from which it appeared as a kind of offset or promontory, and which, as we have said, were generally covered with forest. The neck of the promontory here overhung the turn of the road and the river, at about a couple of hundred yards nearer to Morley House than the spot where De Vaux had told Manners, on their first arrival in the country, that his uncle had been murdered some years before; and the track that lay between the place where he now stood and the highway was a steep precipitous bank of two or three hundred feet in height, covered with loose stones, scattered bushes, and one or two larger trees, thrown forward beyond the mass of wood on the left. The moon was shining bright on the road and the river, and though she had passed her meridian, promised yet several hours of light.

'Come down this little path, sir,' said the gipsy. 'Under that bank, with those bushes round us, about thirty yards down, we can find shelter, and can see everything around, so that there will be no fear of interruption.'

De Vaux followed as he desired, and in a few minutes reached the spot to which he had

pointed. There, upon a felled oak, which only remained to be rolled down the hill, he seated himself on a little piece of level ground, where some one had endeavoured, ineffectually, to establish a quarry, and whence he could behold the village, near his aunt's dwelling, and the top of Morley House itself, though the view up the valley on the other side was interrupted by the sweep of the woody hill. The gipsy stood beside him, and De Vaux anxiously besought him to produce at once the proofs of the very painful assertions which his letter had contained.

'I brought you not here without an object, Edward de Vaux,' said the gipsy, still standing; 'for here I can relate my tale better than anywhere else. Now, tell me what you remember of your early years, and what you have heard of your father's history,—of his history, and that of his family.'

'I did not seek you,' answered De Vaux, 'to tell you what I myself know, but to learn from you facts with which I am unacquainted. You have made assertions, and you must either support them by proof, or let them fall to the ground.'

'Well, well,' said the gipsy, 'be as cautious as you will! If you hesitate to tell the story you have heard, I will tell it for you, Captain de Vaux, as I know you have heard it, and stop me if I speak a word that is false.

'Your grandfather, the twelfth Lord Dewry, left two sons and one daughter, then nearly seventeen. His eldest son, who was about six and twenty, succeeded to his title; and his second son, Edward, your father, who was then at college, went soon after to London to study for the bar. They were both as handsome men as you could look upon; and of your father's life and conduct in the great capital, as I know nothing, with much certainty, so shall I say but little——'

'But it appears to me,' interrupted De Vaux, 'that such is the very matter on which you are called to speak. I was born in London; and if you can tell me nothing certain of my father's conduct in London, you can tell me nothing to the purpose.'

'Patience! patience, sir! I pray you,' replied the gipsy: 'I can tell you much; though on your father's conduct in London, I will spare you as far as may be. William Lord Dewry (your uncle) was one of those men such as the world seldom sees; full of fine and generous feelings, kind, forgiving, noble, with enthusiasm such as the cold call folly, and humanity such as the unfeeling term weakness, though the rectitude of his own conduct was as unbending as yonder oak, and his enthusiasm never led him to aught but what was just and good. For some years after he succeeded to the title he remained unmarried, and it was generally supposed that he would continue to live as a single man. Those who knew him better, however, felt sure that if ever chance should throw in his way a woman who deserved his love, whose heart was full of such feelings as his own, and whose mind was stored with thoughts and wishes as high and noble as those which filled his own bosom, he would not only offer to join his fate to hers, but would love her as woman has seldom been loved on earth—that such a woman, so loved, would become the great object of his being and his life, and would concentrate on herself all those deep and ardent affections which from his boyhood he had shown that his heart possessed. He did at length, as you well know, find such a woman—full of all those qualities which were so bright in himself—beautiful, accomplished, and his equal in rank and fortune. He addressed himself at once to a heart that was free and unengaged; and the same fine properties that had won his love were sure to win her love for him. He was married, and was happy beyond all that he had ever dreamed. He was happy—nay, more, he was content! for the angel of his home was more than all he had expected, and he sought and wished for nothing more. Every feeling, every thought, turned towards her; and, though his kindness, his benevolence, his philanthropy, were doubled rather than diminished, yet no joy was anything to the joy of his love. For a year and six months he was as happy as any human thing can be—happier, perhaps, than any human thing ever was before. I saw his happiness; and oh! how it made my heart expand to behold it! But then suddenly came a change. His wife had given him a child—beautiful, I hear she is, as her mother, and good as her father; but ere the opening of her infant mind could add anything to the happiness of her parents, or afford even a momentary consolation to her father when distress came—her mother was seized with sudden illness, and ere five days were over she was dead.'

The gipsy paused, and seemed to sigh bitterly over the memories of the past; while De Vaux, whose interest in all that concerned his beloved Marian was hardly less than he felt for those things that affected himself, waited anxiously to hear more; for though the story was not unfamiliar to him, yet it was put in a new light, and told in a mild and feeling tone, that gave it a thousand times more force than ever. After a moment or two of silence, the gipsy went on:—'What a change,' he continued, 'came upon him then! The world seemed all forgotten. He appeared as one struck with sudden blindness; and where he had beheld nothing but beauty around him before, he now beheld nothing but a blank. For hours and hours he would ride in solitude through the country, unaccompanied even by a servant. He would pass his friends when he met them as strangers, and when they spoke would seem long ere he remembered them. He forgot all enjoyment and all occupation, and lived in the world as if it were not his proper place. Thus passed the days for near two months, when at the end of that time, he one morning rode forth as usual alone; but he chanced—though it was seldom he mentioned whither he went—he chanced to say that he was going to the county town. He was known, too, to have a large sum of money

on his person; and as he passed by the house of Mrs. Falkland, his sister,—for it was at Dimden he always lived,—he stopped for a few minutes.'

'You seem to know the whole facts as minutely as if you had followed him,' said De Vaux, when the gipsy paused for a moment.

'I do,' said the gipsy; 'and if you will listen, you shall hear how. When he left Mrs. Falkland's, her husband, who was then living, and a noble, frank-hearted man, walked by his brother-in-law's horse as far as the village, but there he left him, and Lord Dewry rode on. He was seen by some boys who were playing in that field—can you see it? half a mile nearer than the village, with a red barn at the side. But none of the country people saw him after, and he never returned to the hall. His servants, who all loved him, were alarmed, and sent over to Mr. Falkland, and he despatched messengers to the county town, with orders to inquire at the villages on the road; but no Lord Dewry was to be heard of anywhere. The evening passed over in terror: night had come on, and the family of Morley House were retiring late to rest when a messenger arrived from Mr. Arden, the magistrate, to inform Mr. Falkland that a gipsy—do you remark—a gipsy had just been taken up upon the charge of beating a young peasant almost to death the day before, and now made a voluntary declaration that he had seen the Lord Dewry murdered at the elm-point, there down below, that very morning at ten o'clock. Mr. Falkland instantly got upon horseback, and rode over to see Mr. Arden; and it was agreed between them that the news should instantly be sent to the Honourable Edward de Vaux, your father, and that till he arrived nothing farther should be asked of the gipsy, except if he knew where the body of Lord Dewry might in any likelihood be found. He said yes: it might be found at the sea; but if they would search in the reeds by the bank they would find the baron's hat, and that in some of the woods or meadows his horse would be met with. Search was instantly made, and some of his words proved true; for the hat, pierced through and through with a shot, was found bloody amongst the reeds, and his horse was discovered grazing in the meadows, four miles down, on the other side of the water. In the meantime, the courier rode night and day to London, and when he arrived found the dead lord's brother at the playhouse. He was very much shocked at the news, and instantly came down hither, with one Sir William Ryder, a good enough man, they said, at heart, but one who had been fond of play, and had lost a fine fortune by that foolish passion. When the new lord arrived, the gipsy was again brought up, and placed before him. A great many questions were asked, and he told this story:—The young man he had beaten had foully ill-used a gipsy woman, and he, the gipsy, had punished him, scarcely as he deserved. He had left him for dead, however, on the ground; and thinking that if he were dead the offence might bring trouble on his people if he went back to them, he hid himself in these woods, and on the morning of the murder was lying down yonder, in the sweep of trees there, just at the head of the point. He had been there all the morning, he said; and, as the country people generally take the short way over the hill, he had seen no one pass, till, about half-past nine o'clock, a man on horseback came and backed in his horse between the two old elm trees that lie about five hundred yards farther up in the bite of the river. He lay very still there, to see what would come of it; and in about half an hour he heard another horse's feet coming quickly up, and Lord Dewry turned the point. The gipsy said that he thought to have sprung out and told him what he had seen, for his heart misgave him as to the purpose of the other horseman; but just at the moment the other came forth, and, riding quietly up, spoke with Lord Dewry calmly enough for some minutes. They then seemed to get into high dispute, and Lord Dewry pushed his horse on upon the road a little, while following, and speaking at his side, the other suddenly drew a pistol from his pocket, and fired right into the baron's head. At the same moment, as he was falling from the saddle, the horse, taking fright, plunged into the river, dragging him by the stirrup, and his hat fell into the rushes. The other horseman looked after him for a moment; but ere the swimming horse reached the opposite bank, he set spurs to his own beast, and was galloping away, when at the turn he was met by another. The gipsy could see them grasp each other's hands; but they stopped not a moment to speak; the second turned his horse with the first, and both galloped away like lightning. The gipsy plunged into the water, he said, to see if he could bring out the body, as soon as he saw that it had become disentangled from the stirrup; but it had sunk to rise no more; and when he was tired with swimming, he returned to the woods.

'Mr. Arden the magistrate said it was a very improbable story; but asked the gipsy if he could recognise the man who had committed the murder. The gipsy replied that he could, if he saw him, and could swear to him whenever he was placed before him. Mr. Arden then said that it would be better, under all circumstances, to commit the gipsy at once for his other offences, when he would be always forthcoming to give evidence if required; but as it was proved that the young man he had beaten was hourly getting better, and acknowledged that he had deserved the treatment he had received, the kind magistrate had no other excuse to propose for committing the gipsy but that of his being a rogue and a vagabond. In this, however, he was over-ruled by Lord Dewry, the new Lord Dewry, after some private consultations with Sir William Ryder. His lordship said, with a kind look to the gipsy, that it would be cruel, he thought, to commit a man to prison for having given voluntary evidence, where it was much needed; and, besides that,

he had reason to think very well of that gipsy, who had, in a degree, been brought up by his father. Mr. Arden, however, suggested that the gipsy himself might have been the murderer; and though Lord Dewry treated the idea with contempt, yet the sturdy magistrate kept him in custody till, by the marks of the horse's feet, and many other things, it was proved that his story must be true. In the meantime, Lord Dewry and Sir William Ryder were very kind to him, and took care that he should want for nothing while he was detained. At length he was liberated, and went to join his own people; promising to return whenever he should be called upon, which everyone felt sure he would do, as he had been educated with the dead man, and loved him as a brother. I need not tell you that I was that gipsy!

'In the meantime,' continued Pharold, 'Mr. Edward de Vaux took the titles and entered into possession of the estates held by his late brother. The will of the last lord was found, and no one wondered that in it he never mentioned his brother's name; for it was known to all the world that they had had many a bitter dispute, and had long been, not as brothers should be. His daughter, Miss de Vaux, and the care of the splendid fortune which she inherited from her mother, were intrusted to his sister, Mrs. Falkland, to Mrs. Falkland's husband, and to a distant relation.

All his servants and friends were remembered by the dead nobleman, and almost every one that he knew was named, except his own brother. The world did wonder, then, that that brother, with a singular generosity, resigned in favour of his niece many things that he might have claimed as belonging to the male heir, and treated all questions between them, in regard to property, with unexampled liberality. When he had settled all things, and retained a number of his brother's domestics, he ordered the hall at Dewry to be put in order; not loving the part of the country where his brother had been murdered. Thither, then, he went, after he had arranged his affairs in London, bringing down with him a young gentleman of seven years old, his only son, and supposed heir to all the property.'

'And my mother!' cried De Vaux, raising his head from his hands, in which position he had been sitting while listening to the gipsy's story; for during its course he had been agitated by many a strange, but ill-defined, emotion. The story of his uncle's murder had always been one on which his mind had rested with awe and pain from his very childhood; but though he had heard it often told, both as a whole and in detached fragments, yet he had never listened to such minute details as were now given, by an eye-witness of the horrible event, who seemed prepared to connect it, too, by some vague and unexplained link, with the painful assertions which had been made in regard to his own doubtful situation. The very expectation, or rather apprehension, of some horrible disclosure to follow at every word the gipsy uttered, had troubled and shaken him greatly; and the name of Sir William Ryder—a person who, it appeared, was then most intimate with his father, but who, it was clear, had since become the object of his most determined hatred—had added deeper feeling of mysterious dread to all those thoughts by which he was already perturbed. What could be the meaning of all this? whither would it lead? how was it to end? were the questions which continually pressed upon him as the gipsy proceeded; and it appeared even a relief when Pharold's last words seemed to bring his ideas back from the new and dreadful topics on which they had been engaged, to the subject of his former doubts and suspicions.

'And my mother!' he cried, as the gipsy paused, 'what of her?'

'Nothing, that I know,' replied Pharold, apparently with some surprise; 'nothing but that she was a Spanish lady, who married your father privately, after breaking her vows in a convent.'

'Then they were married!' cried De Vaux eagerly.

'Certainly!' answered the gipsy: 'I never heard it doubted; though he kept her from all his family, and used her ill; which was one of the causes of his quarrels with his brother. But she was dead before he came down here to take possession of his brother's lands. But let me tell my tale.'

De Vaux again leaned his head upon his hands; everything once more becoming dark and misty around him. 'Go on! go on!' he said; 'go on, and keep me not in suspense, for Heaven's sake!'

'I have now told you,' continued Pharold, 'the story of your family as it went forth to the world, and as you most likely have heard it yourself. It is a goodly tale, and just such as could be desired under such circumstances! The picture is, indeed, a dark and painful one: but it has another side more dark and painful still; and ere you look at it, nerve your mind firmly, young gentleman; for if you be such, as I believe you are, filled with honourable feelings and kindly affections, your very soul will writhe under all you have to hear.'

De Vaux waved his hand for him to go on; and the gipsy continued:—'You have heard the world's version of the story; you must now hear the gipsy's. My early history you know; for a year and nine months I was brought up with your uncle and your father. Your uncle ever loved me—your father never: but he was too proud to seek to injure me; and when I left the false restraints of what you call society, to go back to my own race and my native freedom, he and I were friends, as far as we could be.

'Your uncle I often returned to see, though longer and longer became my absence, and greater and greater my contempt for gilded halls and mercenary slaves in laced jackets. I took a

pleasure, however, a secret pleasure, in marking and learning all the doings of the man I loved best on earth ; and sometimes, though my distaste to fine dwellings and insolent lackeys had grown into a diseased abhorrence that would not let me cross the lordly threshold of Dimden, yet often would I meet him in the park or in the walks, and hold a brief conversation with him in the free air. It was after an absence from this part of the country of near two years that I came back, and found that his heart had been withered by the death of her he loved. I was seeking for an opportunity of meeting him, when the offence was given to an unhappy woman of our tribe, which called for vengeance at my hand ; and I was forced to conceal myself till I could learn what were the ultimate consequences of the punishment that I had inflicted. I hid myself, as I have told you, in that wood ; and all the rest that I said before the magistrates is true : but I said not all the truth. I saw the horseman station himself between the elms ; I saw Lord Dewry ride up, and they met ; I heard the words they spoke , I saw him ride on, and I saw the other follow, though little did I dream his purpose ; I saw him draw the pistol from his bosom ; I saw it raised, and the shot fired that struck the good lord down—and the hand that fired it, young man—the hand that fired it was his brother's !'

'It is false !' cried De Vaux, starting up and half drawing his sword ; 'it is as false as hell itself !'

'It is as true as yon stars in heaven !' replied the gipsy calmly but sternly ; and a long pause followed, while Pharold stood erect and tranquil before the son of him whom he had charged with so fearful a crime, and De Vaux gazed on him with a countenance in which the workings of all the manifold passions that such terrible tidings produced were fearfully visible. 'Will you hear me out?' demanded the gipsy at length.

'I will,' said De Vaux, casting himself down again upon the tree : 'I will ! but think not to escape me. You have made a dreadful charge ; and as there is a God in heaven, you shall show me that it is true before I quit you !' and, leaning his head again upon his hand, he kept his eyes fixed upon the gipsy, as if fearful that he should elude him, till he came to parts of the details that made his hearer again bury his face in his hands.

'I will !' continued Pharold : 'I will show you that what I have uttered is true ; for it was to that purpose that I brought you here. But be more calm, and let me tell you all the circumstances which might lead him to the terrible act that he committed.'

'He committed it not !' murmured De Vaux ; but the gipsy went on as if he had not heard him. 'I have since heard all the facts,' he proceeded, 'from one who knew them too well ; the only one, indeed, besides myself. Edward de Vaux, the younger of the two brothers, was a man of extravagant tastes and habits. He went early and often into other countries, and there he learned expensive vices and follies. I would not pain you ; but he gamed deeply, and lived sumptuously, while your mother lived neglected, and fared but hardly. What he inherited from his father was but small ; what he acquired was nothing ; what he squandered came from the liberality of his brother ; and often his demands were more than any liberality could supply. Lord Dewry remonstrated and intreated, but in vain ; and much and nobly have I heard did he offer to do for him, if he would retire into the country, and treat your mother well. But she died, and that cause of dispute was removed by her death. All check, indeed, seemed now cast away by her husband. He gamed more deeply than ever ; lost all ; applied to his brother ; was refused, and then staked what he did not possess. He lost. Sir William Ryder, his great friend, joined him in an engagement to pay the sum within a certain time ; but shortly before the period arrived, Mr. de Vaux was not to be found by his friend. Sir William thought that he had evaded him in order to cast the whole debt upon his shoulders ; and, learning the route he had taken, followed at full speed ; traced him step by step, and overtook him—at the very moment he had murdered his brother. Horrified, but confused and bewildered, before he well comprehended what he was doing, Sir William became a participator in the crime, by promising to conceal all he had seen ; and, setting spurs to their horses, they arrived in London by different by-roads, in so short a space of time that it seemed impossible they could have done the distance. Well knowing that he must soon be sent for, the heir of the dead man took care to show himself in every place where his presence in London would be marked and remembered, in case of necessity ; and he was found, as I have said, at the playhouse. What sort of hell was in his heart, as he sat and saw mockeries and pageants, I know not.'

'But your story halts, sir,' said De Vaux, sternly ; 'how could he know at what exact spot his brother would be found at that precise time? How could he ——'

'By that letter !' said the gipsy, placing abruptly an old, but well-preserved, paper in his hands, on which the regular post marks were easily discernible.

'But I cannot read it by this faint light,' said De Vaux, attempting to make out the contents, after gazing at the address; 'what is its purport?'

'I will tell you,' replied the gipsy, striking a light with a flint and touchwood that he carried, —'I will tell you ; though you shall soon be able to satisfy yourself. It is your uncle's letter to your father, telling him that he has not sufficient money at his banker's to meet his fresh demand ; but that if he will be at the inn at the county town of ——, at noon of the eighteenth of May—the very day of the murder—he will give him the sum of five thousand pounds, which is all he can collect without burdening himself for other people's faults, in a manner that he

does not choose to do. There!' he continued, lighting a few dry sticks; 'there is light enough to read!'

De Vaux read the letter. It was such exactly as the gipsy described: it was written in a hand which he remembered from other papers he had seen to be that of his uncle; it was dated four days before his death, signed with his name, sealed with his arms, directed to his brother, and, by the post-marks, had evidently been received. Conviction was forcing itself painfully upon his mind, but drowning men will catch at straws, and he hoped yet to find some flaw in the horrible history he heard, and to be enabled to give it the lie to his own heart. He returned the letter, and folding his arms upon his breast, bade the gipsy go on, while, with a knitted brow and quivering lip, he continued gazing upon vacancy, suffering his mind to roam wildly through a thousand painful thoughts and memories, but without letting one word escape his ear.

'By this letter,' continued the gipsy, 'did he know exactly when his brother would set out for the town of ——; and he knew his habits, too, well enough to arrange the rest of his plan. But crime is always agitated, and it is thus that even the coolest and most determined ever leave some trace behind by which murder may be detected. Your uncle came not so soon as he had expected, and he took the letter from his pocket to be sure that he himself had not overstepped the hour. Just as he was reading, the horse's feet which bore Lord Dewry sounded, and he hastily thrust back the paper, as he thought, into his pocket; but it fell, and I saw it, and forgot it not afterwards. When the deed was done, he paused for a moment gazing upon the swimming horse, and the sinking form of his brother, as it detached itself from the stirrup, and without even a struggle, the waters closed over his head, and I am as sure as there is a heaven above us, that at that instant the murderer would have given lands and lordships—nay, life itself—to have recalled the irrevocable act that he had done. He could gaze at it no longer; but, striking his spurs into his horse like a madman, he turned back the way he came. Just at the turn of the wood he was met by Sir William Ryder. What he said I know not; but he grasped his hand for a moment, and then galloped away, followed by the other. Ere he had gone far his coolness had returned; for before he came down here, all his plans had been arranged, and his conduct decided. He had questioned the messenger, too, and had heard the evidence that I had given; and though I had declared that I could swear to the person, he felt sure, from my *not* swearing to him, that I either did not really know him, or had determined to conceal my knowledge. At all events, he had no resource but to front the matter, and he did so boldly. When I was brought into the justice-room, I could see that he turned a little pale, and at the same time he put up his finger to his lip in a way that I might take for a signal or not as I pleased. I repeated all I had said before—nay, I went farther—and described exactly the appearance of the murderer; but such descriptions are always loose, and no one asked me whether any of those present was the man——'

'Would you have said yes if they had?' interrupted De Vaux.

'I do not well know what I might have done,' replied the gipsy, 'but I think not. What use would it have been to me to destroy the son of one who had loved and cherished me? He had committed an awful crime, it is true; but I was not the avenger. Besides, I knew that vengeance, in its intensity tenfold more terrible than aught that man could inflict, was in his heart already,—that there was a serpent eating it up,—that the mighty, the almighty, Avenger of all crimes was there in his terrors, and that every hour of his after-existence would be constant judgment and continual death. No, no! on my life, I did not so much hate as pity him. At night, after I had been removed from the justice-room, I heard the door of the chamber in which they had confined me open, and Sir William Ryder came in with a light. He was a fine-hearted man, though he had been misled; and although the real murderer had shown himself but little shaken, yet through the whole of my examination he, Sir William Ryder, had been agitated, as I could see, to his very soul. Both he and the other, however, whether to make me a friend or what matters little, had done all they could to soften the hardness of old Squire Arden, as he was called; but Sir William now came to me to see what I did know, and how far they could trust me. It was a difficult task; and had he gone about it as cunningly as some would have done, he might have failed with me. But he was too much moved for that. He spoke kindly to me, however, and told me that Lord Dewry was very much interested for me, and would take care of me, and I told him at once to bid Lord Dewry take care of himself, for his was the case of danger, and not mine. So then he said that he saw I knew more than I had spoken, and that Lord Dewry was grateful to me. "Call him not by a title that is not his," I answered, "for I know that the patent of their nobility bears, that if any of the family, judged according to law, be found guilty of a felony, he and his children are to be considered dead, their line extinct, and the next heir to claim as if they were not." He answered that that mattered not, for that his friend had not been found guilty of any felony, nor ever would; and that he had only to say, if I would quit the kingdom, till he gave me leave to return, he would secure me the sum of one thousand pounds directly, and a pension for my life. I said I would think of it, and tell him when I was at liberty; and I was very soon after set free. Sir William Ryder did not fail to find me out, however, and it was agreed between us that I should go, and that he should meet me at the seaport where I embarked, and there give me the money.

'It took a time, however, to move the tribe

to the port, and some were unwilling to go without knowing the reason. So we divided, some going with me, some betaking themselves to their own way. I saw Sir William Ryder often, and when I wrote to him to tell him that we were near a seaport in Wales, he came down directly and visited the encampment. He told me that he too was about to set out for America, and intended to spend the rest of his life in the colonies. "I will try," he said, "by devoting the remainder of my days to doing good, and walking uprightly with all men, to efface from my memory the traces of many follies, and of one great crime, in which I have not been a sharer, indeed, but which I have aided to conceal." The second day, however, that he came out to us, his horse took fright at a monkey which some of our people had amongst the tents, and threw him violently. He broke his collar-bone and several of his ribs, and being carried into a hut, we all nursed him tenderly. I found him better than I thought, and learned to love him; and under our care he got well sooner than if all the doctors in the world had seen him. While he was recovering it was that I learned how all had happened, and he tried to persuade himself, and to make me believe, that the murder had been committed in a moment of passion, and not by design—or that his friend was distracted with anxiety and distress at the moment that he committed it. When he left us for America, I went away to Ireland. I have since seen many other lands, and have lived for some years in Scotland, but I never returned to this country of England till about three weeks ago.'

The gipsy paused, and De Vaux remained as he had placed himself, with his head bent down almost to his knees, and his eyes buried in his extended hands. He continued silent long, bowed down by a sense of misery, and humiliation, and despair. What would he have given at that moment to have all his former apprehensions confirmed if the present terrible doubts could have been thereby swept away!—doubts, indeed, they could scarcely now be called, for the gipsy's story was too consistent in every part, was too much combined with facts within his own knowledge, was too clear an explanation of many parts of his father's conduct—his gloom—his reserve—his irritation—his agitation at the very name of Sir William Ryder—for him to entertain anything but one of those faint, lingering, insane hopes, which death itself is the only thing that can extinguish. But, for the moment, the thought of whether there were still a doubt had merged itself in the more agonising ideas of what must be his fate if the story were true. His own father! How could he ever behold him again? How was he to act towards him? What was he to do? Then came the idea of Marian in all her beauty, in all her gentleness, in all her generous love—and he felt that she could never be his—that the blood of her father placed between them an obstacle that could never be removed—that no time, no change, no effort could ever cast down that dreadful barrier—that at the very moment when his passionate love had been raised by her noble conduct almost to adoration was the moment at which he must sacrifice her for ever! And how must he sacrifice her? How must he act towards her? He could not—he dared not explain, by even a single word, the cause of that sacrifice—he could not tell her what had happened—he could not even have the blessing of weeping with her over their blighted hopes. Whichever way he turned, it was all horror and destruction; and the brain of the unhappy young man seemed to reel with the agony he suffered.

After a long and terrible silence, one deep and bitter groan found its way to his lips.

The gipsy's heart was moved for him, and, after gazing upon him for several minutes, he said, 'I grieve from my very heart to pain you thus, but yet, young man, be comforted—there is a balm for all things.'

The very words of comfort, however, proceeding from the same tongue that had destroyed all his happiness for ever, roused De Vaux almost to frenzy; and, starting up, he exclaimed, 'Either what you have told me is false, or you must know that there is no comfort for me on earth. What balm do you mean?'

'The balm of time,' replied the gipsy, unmoved, 'which, as I know by the experience of many sorrows, can take the venom from the most cankered wound.'

De Vaux glared at him for a moment as if he would have struck him to the earth, and then—for there are some loads of misery which are too vast for the human mind to comprehend or to believe at first—and then replied, 'I believe you have been deceiving me; and woe be unto you if you have! Have you any other proof?' he cried, striving eagerly to catch at a doubt. 'Have you any other proof! if so, produce it quickly.'

'I am not deceiving you, young gentleman,' answered the gipsy; 'and I can forgive both your anger and your unbelief."

'But the proof! the proof!' cried De Vaux; 'have you any other proof?'

'I have,' answered Pharold, 'and I will produce it, though the letter I have shown you is proof enough. I grieve for you, sir, but you must not injure me.'

'The letter you may have stolen,' replied De Vaux, fiercely, 'or found it years afterwards—what other proof have you? Give me some other proof, and I will believe you.'

'You believe me already at your heart,' answered the gipsy; 'but the other proof is this:—I have said that the murderer gazed for a moment after his victim, and that I saw that he gazed in deep and terrible remorse—know you how I saw that it was so? Thus—The moment that the shot was fired, and that his brother was falling, his hand let the pistol drop from his grasp, and he sat on his horse motionless as a statue, as if the deed he had done had turned

him into stone ; nor did he move hand or limb till he turned and galloped away as if the fiends of hell were pursuing him. The pistol was not lost any more than the letter, and happy for him was it that they both fell into the hands of one who concealed them carefully ; for had they been found by any other, your father might have ended his days upon the scaffold more than twenty years ago. You ask for more proof. Look there ! that is the weapon, and you know the arms of a younger brother of your race too well to doubt me longer.'

De Vaux took the pistol which the gipsy produced. It was curiously inlaid with silver, and the arms of his family embossed upon the stock. He had once seen one—and only one—precisely similar, in the hands of his father, when he came upon him by accident in his private study. His father had put it away in haste into a chest that contained it ; and, with a pale cheek and quivering lip, had reproved his son for breaking in upon his privacy. De Vaux now saw the fellow-weapon of the one he had then beheld : the last faint gleam of hope left his heart for ever ; and, striking his hand upon his bosom, and groaning in the bitterness of his heart, he cast himself frantically down upon the cold ground.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

It is a wonder that man ever smiles ; for there is something so strange and awful in the hourly uncertainty of our fate, in the atmosphere of darkness and insecurity that surrounds our existence, in the troops of dangers to our peace and to our being, that ride invisible upon every moment as it flies, that man is, as it were, like a blind man in the front of a great battle, where his hopes and his joys are being swept down on every side, and in which his own existence must terminate at length, in some undefined hour, and some unknown manner—and yet he smiles as if he were at a pageant.

Were his smiles the smile of faith and confidence in the great, good Being who sees the struggle and prepares the reward, he might smile unshaken indeed ; but, alas, alas ! is it so? —I fear but seldom.

On the third morning of Colonel Manners's stay at Morley House, and on which he expected letters that would give him a fair excuse for abridging his visit, he rose as early, but came down somewhat later than usual. He still, however, expected to find himself earlier than the rest of the family : but, on passing the music room, the door of which was ajar, he heard the notes of a harpsichord—the solace and delight of our worthy ancestors—mingling with some gay voices talking ; and, taking the prescriptive right of opening quite all half-opened doors, he walked in, and found Miss Falkland at the instrument, speaking cheerfully over her shoulder to Miss De Vaux, who stood behind.

A slight complaining cry on the part of the lazy hinges made both ladies turn their eyes towards it ; and Isadore smiled as she did so, while a faint colour spread itself deepening over Marian's soft cheek—perhaps she might expect to see some one else than Colonel Manners, and be just sufficiently disappointed to say something civil and kind to him on his entrance, as a sort of compensation for the bad compliment she paid him at the bottom of her heart.

'Isadore was just talking of you, Colonel Manners,' she said, looking towards her cousin, as if leaving her to explain in what manner.

'There is a proverb to that effect, madam,' replied Manners, smiling ; 'but I am always glad to find myself subject of discourse to those I esteem, if the matter be not censure at least. May I be let into the secret?'

'Oh, beyond all doubt,' replied Isadore. 'The fact is, De Vaux betrayed you last night, Colonel Manners ; and told me, without even binding me to secrecy, that you sing remarkably well,'

'He did me injustice, I assure you,' replied Manners ; 'but if that be "the head and front of my offence," I can prove myself innocent of singing remarkably well at any time you like.'

'No time like the present, Colonel Manners,' said Isadore. 'It wants full half an hour to breakfast, and there is nothing on earth so painful as to live in long-drawn expectation of such things. Will you sing, Colonel Manners?'

'I believe,' he replied, 'that there is some superstitious penalty attached to singing before breakfast ; but, nevertheless, I will dare the adventure if you have any music that I know, for the sin of accompanying myself I commit not.'

'Do you know that?' asked Miss Falkland ; 'or that? or that?'

'No, indeed,' answered Colonel Manners ; 'but I know the air of this one, and have sung it more than once to different words, the composition of a lady possessing no small poetical powers. I will try to recollect them now ; though, to speak the truth, it is doing some injustice to the lines to take them from the drama for which they were designed, and apply them to an old song.'

'Oh, never mind ; we will make all due allowances,' replied Miss Falkland ; 'am I to accompany you, or Marian?—Oh, very well, with all my heart?—Is it to be the time of a monody or a jig?'

'Not too fast, if you please,' replied Colonel Manners ; and, Miss Falkland accompanying him, he sang the following lines to an air which was not then very new, but which is now in all probability lost to posterity.

SONG.

'I woo thee not as others woo,
I flatter not as others do,
Nor vow that I adore ;
I cannot laugh, I cannot smile,
Nor use, as they, each courtly wile,
But oh, I love thee more,

'The rich, the noble, and the great,
Offer thee wealth, and power, and state,
And fortunes running o'er!
How can I smile, when none of these
Give me the worldly power to please,
Though I may love thee more?

'And yet I hope, because I love,
With thoughts that set thee far above
Vain fortune's glittering store.
Others may deem thou canst be won
By things that sparkle in the sun,
But oh, I love thee more.

'I do believe that unto thee,
Truth, honour, plain sincerity,
Are jewels far before
All that the others think are dear;
And yet far more than they I fear,
Because I love thee more.

'I love thee more than all the train
Who flaunt, who flatter, and who feign,
And vow that they adore:
I love thee as men loved of yore—
Ah, no, I love thee more—far more
Than man e'er loved before.'

'I do not think I could have resisted those verses well sung,' cried Isadore, smiling, as he concluded, 'if I had been the most disdainful beauty that ever carried a hawk upon her glove in the days of old. What do you say, Marian?'

'I do not know how far my powers of resistance might go,' answered Marian de Vaux, 'but I should very much like to hear the rest of the story. You say that it is in a drama, Colonel Manners, I think; pray, can it be procured?'

'I am afraid not,' answered Manners: 'it is the writing of a lady, and has never been given to the world; at least, as far as I know.'

'But what a clamorous summons that bell makes: pray does it ring for breakfast every morning? I did not hear it yesterday.'

'That was because you were out, having your fortune told, when it rang, Colonel Manners,' replied Miss Falkland: 'but it rings every morning at this hour; and if Mrs. Falkland is not down, it falls to my lot to make the tea. Wherefore I must now remove to the breakfast room.'

Thus saying, she led the way, while her cousin and Colonel Manners followed; and the hot and shining urn having taken its wonted place, she proceeded with the breakfast arrangements, while the butler bustled about, first at the sideboard, and then at the table, looking ever and anon at the two young ladies, and then at Colonel Manners, and then at the fire-place, till, having nothing farther to do, he was obliged to retire.

'Gibson looks as if he had some vast secret upon his mind,' said Isadore, speaking to her cousin; 'did you see, Marian, how he moved about?—You must know, Colonel Manners, that that old gentleman is a very privileged person in our family, and often condescends to pour forth the secrets of the village upon us, in despite of all our struggles and reluctance.'

'I am sorry he did not gratify himself this morning,' said Manners: 'there are few things more delightful than a village story well told.'

'You were the great obstacle, I am afraid,' replied Miss Falkland; 'he has his own peculiar notions of decorum, and a visitor is pretty sure of reverence; but I do believe, from his extreme alacrity this morning, that he would have even disregarded your presence had a single word been said to him. But I did not choose to gratify him even by a word; for I knew if I had but said, "Gibson, bring more butter," he would instantly have burst forth with "Yes, miss, I'll tell you all about it. The park-keeper's daughter's husband's sister——" and so he would have gone on for an hour.'

Colonel Manners could not help laughing; and even Marian smiled at the manner in which her gay cousin imitated the man's prolixity; but at the same time there was an expression of anxiety on Miss de Vaux's countenance which nothing but the presence of Edward de Vaux could have done away. He had not yet come down, however, and the next person who entered was Mrs. Falkland, whose first observation after the common salutations of the morning was, 'Why—is not Edward down? Surely he has not grown a sluggard in the wars!'

'Oh, no, my dear aunt,' replied Marian; 'I daresay he was down before we were up, for he told me last night that he was going out early this morning, but would be back to breakfast.'

The old butler was just at that moment entering with a partridge pie; and halting in the midst, he exclaimed, 'No, indeed, Miss Marian; Master Edward has not come down, because he has never been up.'

'Never been up!' said Mrs. Falkland, mistaking the man's meaning; 'then you had better send up his servant to wake him, Gibson. But why are you so pale, Marian? what is the matter?'

'Oh, that is not it at all, ma'am,' replied the butler, taking upon himself to answer for all parties. 'Mr. de Vaux has never been in bed last night, ma'am. His servant told me so this minute. There is the bed turned down, says he, just as the housemaid left it, and his slippers standing by the great chair, and his hat, and sword, and riding-coat gone.'

'Nay, Marian, do not look so alarmed,' said Isadore, laying her hand affectionately upon that of her cousin. 'This will prove all airy nothing, depend upon it; but you had better come away with me, love, and leave mamma and Colonel Manners to sift it; for you will only agitate yourself more than is at all necessary by listening to the miraculous conjectures of every different servant in the house.'

'No, no; I would a great deal rather hear all, Isadore,' answered Marian, in her usual calm tone, though the excessive paleness which had spread over her countenance evinced, clearly enough, that her heart was anything but at ease. 'You had better send for Edward's servant, my dear aunt!'

Her suggestion was instantly followed, and De Vaux's servant, who had been an old soldier, entered the room, and stood at ease before the party assembled round the breakfast-table.

'Colonel Manners, will you be so kind——' said Mrs. Falkland.

'Most certainly, my dear madam,' replied Manners, understanding her meaning, as well as if she had expressed it. 'When did you see your master last, William?'

'Last night, sir, at twenty minutes to twelve,' said the man.

'Did he seem as if he were about to go to bed?' demanded Manners.

'No, sir,' replied the servant. 'He made me give him his dressing-gown and slippers, but told me not to wait, for that he had a great deal to write before he could go to bed.'

Marian's face cleared up a little, for she was glad to imagine that De Vaux might have sat up writing on all the many subjects which she knew occupied his mind till daylight had appeared, and might then have set out at once for the gipsy encampment; but Colonel Manners proceeded—'Do you know at what time any of the other servants were up?'

'The groom and I were up at five, sir,' replied the man, 'and it was just dawning then; but as we went along the corridor I saw my master's door ajar, and thinking I must have left it so by carelessness, I just pulled it gently to.'

'Were all the horses in the stable?' asked Colonel Manners.

'All, sir,' answered the servant.

'And now, William, in what state did you find your master's room?' demanded Mrs. Falkland.

'Why, madam, I found that nobody had been in bed, clearly enough,' replied the man; 'and I found too, that Captain de Vaux had put off his dressing-gown and slippers, and put on his riding coat and boots; and I remarked, also, that the curtains of one of the windows were undrawn, and the window itself open.'

'Oh, then, I dare say he went out after daylight,' said Colonel Manners, 'and will soon be back. Shall we ask him anything farther, my dear madam?'

Mrs. Falkland had nothing more to inquire, and the man was dismissed.

'It is as well,' said Manners, who knew that De Vaux was the man of all others to be very much mortified, if he came back and found that his absence had been made unnecessarily a nine days' wonder of,—'It is as well to treat this business as quietly as possible, though I confess it does seem to me strange that De Vaux should go out so early, so very early, as to be seen by none of the servants, and also should never have gone to bed; but I think Miss de Vaux said just now that he mentioned his intention of going out very early.'

'I did so,' replied Marian, colouring slightly, from a feeling of embarrassment, in regard to disclosing any part of all that her cousin had confided to her, and yet painfully anxious on his account. 'He intended to go to speak with somebody, who gave you, I think, a letter for him yesterday, Colonel Manners.'

Manners was not a little anxious for his friend also; but he saw Marian's still deeper anxiety, and he strove tenderly to avoid giving her greater pain than necessary, while he yet continued to investigate the cause of her lover's absence. 'Oh, if he be gone to that person who gave me the letter,' he said, 'De Vaux is safe enough; but perhaps he may not be back for an hour or two, as it is a long way, and they may have much to speak of; but yet, Mrs. Falkland, I should like, if you could make an excuse for sending for the housemaid who usually washes the stone steps, to ask her one or two questions.'

'Certainly,' answered Mrs. Falkland. 'If you will ring the bell, I will find some excuse.'

The housemaid was accordingly sent for; and holding fast either corner of her apron, presented herself before the company in the breakfast-room. Mrs. Falkland then asked her one or two questions of no particular moment, and Colonel Manners next demanded, somewhat to the girl's surprise, 'The mornings are becoming frosty now, are they not, my good girl?'

'Oh, that they are, sir,' answered she. 'It was all as white this morning as if it had snowed last night.'

'And did you see any marks of feet upon the steps?' demanded Manners.

'No, sir, none,' replied the girl.

'Are you sure?' repeated Colonel Manners.

'Oh, quite sure, sir,' she replied; 'for I washed and whitened the steps with my own two hands, and cold work it was; and I must have seen steps if there had been any.'

After this answer she was dismissed, curtseying low, and not ungracefully.

'I daresay he will soon come back,' said Colonel Manners, when the woman was gone; 'and, at all events, if he be with the person who gave me the letter, he is in no danger, I am sure.'

Both Mrs. Falkland and her daughter perceived that Manners, at least, if not Marian, spoke with a slight touch of mystery concerning the letter and its sender, but of course they asked no questions; and Colonel Manners's assurance that his friend was in no danger served in some degree to tranquillise Marian. The breakfast, as may be supposed, passed over dully enough, for every one was more anxious than they chose to show, and their anxiety was, of course, increased by every minute as it flew. Each passing step that made itself heard in the breakfast-room, the sound of every opening door, caused Marian's heart to beat, and Isadore to look round, but still the person for whose return they were so anxious did not appear; and however slowly the minutes flew, so many of them passed away at length as to justify serious alarm.

The time had now lingered on till eleven had struck by the clock in the hall, and some very painful remembrances of all that had taken place at the death of her beloved brother were recalled to the mind of Mrs. Falkland by the unaccountable absence of her nephew. Isadore, with all her natural cheerfulness, was anxious and silent; but it was scarcely possible to express all the painful emotions that thrilled in

the bosom of Marian de Vaux. Manners, for his part,—though his feelings as a man were, of course, essentially different from those of the persons by whom he was now surrounded,—was far more alarmed about his friend's absence than he liked to admit, and somewhat undecided in regard to what he should do himself, under existing circumstances. He wished much to go and seek his friend; but he did not like to do so till the length of time was sufficient to warrant the conclusion that some accident must have befallen him; and at the same time he reflected that, during his absence some news might arrive which would render his presence and assistance necessary at Morley House. At length, however, he could master his impatience no longer; and ringing the bell, he said, with as much appearance of unconcern as he could command, 'I think, my dear madam, that it may be as well for me to go and see if I can hear anything of De Vaux, in the direction which his fair cousin imagines that he has taken. I do not, indeed, think that there is any cause for alarm; but it may quiet your mind.'

'Oh, yes, yes! pray do, Colonel Manners,' cried Marian, starting up, and clasping her hands. 'I beg your pardon for asking you such a thing; but, indeed, it will be a very great consolation.'

'If it afford you the slightest comfort, my dear young lady,' replied Colonel Manners, 'it will be the greatest pleasure to me. Will you send my servant?' he added, as the butler appeared. The servant came promptly; for the anxiety of the parlour soon finds its way, in a greater or less degree, to the servants' hall; and all the domestics at Morley House were as much on the alert as the garrison of a newly-invested fort.

'Put my saddle on the grey directly,' said Colonel Manners; 'saddle Amherst for yourself, and bid Captain de Vaux's servant get a horse ready to come with me.' The man retired. 'I will just put myself in riding costume, and be down directly,' Manners added; and leaving the ladies still gazing in melancholy guise from the windows of the breakfast-room, he retired to his own apartment.

Long before the horses could be ready, however, he had rejoined them, and was in the act of saying, 'Now, I think, Mrs. Falkland, with three old soldiers upon the search, we must soon be able to bring you tidings of your nephew; and, I trust, perfectly satisfactory tidings, too,' when the butler again made his appearance. The terror expressed upon his countenance, and his first exclamation of 'Oh, ma'am!' instantly sent every drop of blood from Marian's cheek back to her heart. Colonel Manners would fain have stopped a communication which was evidently alarming, and which might not only be a confirmation of their worst fears, but be told in the most abrupt and most painful manner; but it was too late, and the old man went on, 'Oh, madam, here is John Harwood, who has the cottage on t'other side of the point, come up to say, that last night, about one o'clock, he heard shots fired in the wood, and he's afraid there's been bad business there.'

Marian dropped down where she stood, as if she had been struck with lightning; and for the time all attention was called towards her. Colonel Manners aided to carry the fair unhappy girl to her room; and then leaving her to the care of her female relations, he returned to question both the butler and the peasant, whose intelligence had so much increased their alarm. On inquiry, however, he found that old Gibson's taste for the sublime and horrible had given greater effect to John Harwood's tale than it deserved.

The man had simply heard shots fired, and his own natural conclusion had been that poachers were busy in the wood, of which, as a dependent on Mrs. Falkland's family, he found himself bound to give information. Colonel Manners, however, sent another servant to the stables to hurry the horses, and then returning to the breakfast-room, wrote down a few words in pencil, to inform Mrs. Falkland that the story had been exaggerated; but he was almost instantly joined by Isadore, who assured him that her cousin was better.

Moments of grief, anxiety, and danger are wonderfully powerful in breaking down all the cold and icy barriers which society places between us and those we like; and Isadore Falkland came forward, and laid her fair hand as familiarly upon Colonel Manners's arm as if she had known him from her infancy. There was an earnestness in her fine eyes, too, and an appealing softness in her whole look, that was very irresistible. 'Colonel Manners,' she said, 'this state of apprehension and uncertainty is very dreadful, especially to us poor women, who, having but little knowledge of the world and its ways, have little means of judging whether our fears be reasonable or not. I can see that you have put a restraint upon yourself before Marian; but I beseech you to tell me, at least,—if you have any friendship for a person you have known so short a time,—what is your real opinion? Do you think there is any serious cause for apprehension?'

'You and your family, Miss Falkland,' replied Manners, 'have taught me how soon one can feel the deepest interest and friendship for those who deserve it; but in regard to De Vaux, I really see no cause for apprehension.'

'Nay, nay, Colonel Manners,' said Isadore, 'I shall not think you have much regard for me if you try to soothe me by false hopes respecting my cousin. There is an anxiety in your look which could not be there if there were no cause for alarm.'

'Indeed, Miss Falkland,' he replied, with a smile which was not of the gayest character in the world,—'indeed, I have the deepest regard for you, and would not deceive you for a moment. De Vaux's absence is strange undoubtedly. His never having gone to bed is strange. But in regard to these shots which have been heard

—as the man himself believed till your old butler infected him with his own miraculous mood—they have been undoubtedly fired by poachers; and I see not the slightest reason for believing that they are in any way connected with your cousin's absence.'

There had been a degree of earnestness in Manners's profession of regard that had called a slight glow into Isadore's cheek, and made her heart beat a little quicker, though, Heaven knows, he had not the slightest thought of making her heart beat with any but its ordinary pulse, and Isadore herself never suspected that he had. Whatever caused the glow, it was all gone in an instant, and she answered, 'Perhaps what makes us all the more uneasy is that none of us can forget that my uncle, Marian's father, was murdered many years ago in this neighbourhood; and the first news of his death came upon mamma by surprise, in the same way that this has done upon poor Marian.'

'I trust in Heaven, and believe most firmly, Miss Falkland, that you will find no farther resemblance between the fate of your cousin and that of his uncle,' replied Colonel Manners; 'but, at all events, I will lose no time, and spare no exertion, in endeavouring to satisfy you as to his fate; and if it should cost me my life, I will discover him before I give up the search.'

'Nay, nay, you must take care of your life,' said Isadore; 'it must doubtless be valuable to many, and therefore must not be risked unadvisedly.'

'It is valuable to none that I know of, Miss Falkland,' said Manners, with a melancholy smile; 'and to myself least of all; but, nevertheless, I never trifle with it, looking upon it but as a loan from that great Being who will demand it again when He himself thinks fit. But I anticipate no danger from my visit to the gipsies.'

'Are you going, then, to the gipsies in search of Edward?' exclaimed Miss Falkland, in evident astonishment. 'Good Heaven! I had no idea of that.'

'It was from one of them that I received the letter to which Miss de Vaux referred,' replied Colonel Manners; 'and I may add,' he continued, 'to you, Miss Falkland, that the impression that letter made upon your cousin was such as to induce me to believe that if news is to be heard of him anywhere, it will be from them that I shall obtain it.'

'This is all very strange, indeed,' cried Isadore. 'But tell me, Colonel Manners, do you know the contents of the letter?'

'Not in the least,' he replied; 'but certain it is that whatever they were, they affected your cousin sensibly. I had it from a gipsy man, certainly of a very superior stamp to the rest; although I found him consorting with a gang of as ruffianly fellows as ever I beheld.'

'Oh, then, for Heaven's sake, take more men with you,' cried Isadore, eagerly: 'you may get murdered too, and then——'

'Nay, nay, I have no fear,' answered Manners, 'and there you see are the horses. Three strong men on horseback might surely contend with a whole legion of gipsies.'

'Must I plead in vain, Colonel Manners,' said Isadore, really apprehensive for his safety, and desirous of persuading him, but blushing at the same time from feeling conscious that she was more apprehensive for him than she had often before felt for any one; 'or must I ask you for my sake, if you will not for Heaven's sake? But consider what we should do if we were to lose your aid and assistance at such a moment. Take two or three of our servants with you also.'

'For your sake, Miss Falkland, I would do much more difficult things,' replied Manners, earnestly; 'but listen to my reasons. It would delay me long to wait till fresh horses are saddled, and longer to take men on foot with me. In many cases speed is everything: I have lost more time than I can well excuse already; and I can assure you, that with the two strong and trustworthy fellows who accompany me, there is nothing on earth to fear. Adieu: I doubt not soon, very soon, to bring you not only news, but good news.'

Thus saying, he left the room, and sprang upon horseback, while Isadore returned to the apartment of her cousin, who was now in bed by the orders of the village apothecary, and in the act of taking such medicines as he judged most likely to calm and soothe the mind by their sedative effect upon the body. Here Isadore communicated in a low voice to her mother all that she had gathered from Colonel Manners; and placing herself at the window of her fair cousin's room, watched the dark edge of the hill where it cut upon the sky, till at length she saw the figures of three horses straining with their riders up the steep ascent. The next moment they came upon the level ground at the top, changed their pace into a quick gallop, were seen for a minute or two flying along against the clear blue behind, and then, passing on, were lost entirely to her sight.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PLOT AGAINST PHAROLD.

We must now beg leave to retrograde a little in regard to time; and in order to bring every character in our story to the same point, must turn for a while to a personage of whom we have heard nothing since the day after Edward de Vaux's arrival at Morley House.

The father of Edward de Vaux—for it is to him we must now turn—had gone on in the usual road by which small errors grow into great crimes. He had committed follies, and yielded to passions. Passions had hardened into vices, and vices had ultimately hurried him beyond what he would at first have dreamed possible for a reasonable creature to perpetrate. In the story we have heard told by the gipsy,

the part that he had acted was in no degree overdrawn by the narrator, though there were some secrets in Lord Dewry's breast alone, which neither, indeed, justified nor even palliated his crime—for such deeds admit not of palliation—but which showed, at least, that the crowning act itself was not accompanied by many of the circumstances which seemed to aggravate it. Overwhelmed by a debt that he could not pay, disappointed of relief from a source that had never before failed, Mr. De Vaux had set out from London to meet his brother in a state of mind which approached insanity, and was, in fact, despair. Hardened by many years of vice, he had retained very few of those Christian principles which had not been wanting in his early education; and there remained, certainly, not sufficient virtue of any kind to make him view an escape from disgrace, by an act of suicide, as anything unmanly or infamous in itself. He had determined, then, either to obtain from his brother the full sum he demanded, by whatever means might suggest themselves at the moment—threats, supplications, or remonstrances—or to terminate his own existence on the spot,—principally with a view to avoid the shame he anticipated in London if he could not discharge his obligations, but partly, also, with a savage desire of inflicting bitter regrets upon his brother for the obduracy of his refusal.

As the most retired spot for executing this purpose, he had chosen the point where we have seen that he had waited his brother's coming; and there a busy devil, that had been stirring at his heart all the way down, renewed its suggestions with tenfold importunity. He saw before him some of the rich lands of Lord Dewry; he saw them smiling with the promise of abundance; all seemed happy in the world but his own heart; all seemed prosperous but himself. His brother, notwithstanding his late loss, appeared in his eyes peculiarly blessed; and again and again the fiend within asked him what right by nature had his brother, because he was the elder, to the sole possession of all those advantages, which, the same evil spirit lyingly told him, would have kept him from vice and misery, had they been equally divided between them? His brother arrived while he was in this mood. The first means he employed to obtain what he wanted were intreaty and persuasion; and when these failed, he had recourse to threats and violence. Lord Dewry retorted with reproach and reprehension; and his brother, in a moment of frantic passion, brought the curse of Cain upon his own head.

The agony of remorse was the first thing that succeeded; but self-preservation, and the enjoyment of that which he had so dearly purchased, became the next considerations, and he bent all the energies of a keen and daring mind to that purpose. He mastered his own feelings, both bodily and mental; and, after returning to London with a degree of speed and perseverance that killed the horse which bore him, he overcame both personal fatigue and anguish of heart, and showed himself, on the evening of his return, at two private parties, and one public place; and, what is more, he showed himself with a smiling countenance and an unembarrassed air. But when it was all over—the examination of the facts, the taking possession of the property, and the removal of those who could betray him—the excitement which had been caused by danger passed away,—that bubble, the hope of happiness without virtue, burst under his rude touch, and left his heart to remorse for ever.

Knowing that he must often see his brother's child—though, at first, the sight was full of agony—he forced himself, by a great effort, to endure it, till he had overcome the pain by habit; and, at the same time, the lingering remains of some better feelings in his heart made him look upon every generous or kindly thing that he could do towards her as an act of atonement for the crime he had committed.

Such were some of the motives, or, rather, such were some of the facts, which had influenced Lord Dewry in all his actions for the last twenty years. For a time, indeed, he had affected gaiety which he did not feel, and mingled in society which had lost all charm for him: but the revellings of the never-dying worm upon his heart's inmost core would make themselves felt, and gradually he drew back from the world; gave himself up to solitude and stately seclusion; forgot what it was to smile; and only mingled with his fellow-men to pour forth upon them the gall and bitterness that welled from an everlasting source in his own bosom.

Remorse, however, was not the only fiend that preyed upon his heart,—fear, too, had its share. We have said, and said truly, that he was corporeally as brave a man as ever lived: he knew not what bodily fear is; but that is a very, very different affection of the complicated being man from the mental terrors, the daily doubts, the hourly apprehensions, that crowded upon him in solitude and retirement. Corporeal pain, the simple act of dying, he feared not, and there yet lingered in his mind some faint traces of his early faith, suggesting vague ideas of atonement made for man's crimes, which led him to believe that the anguish which he suffered below might be received in place of repentance, and procure him pardon hereafter; so that, on ordinary occasions, he felt no tangible dread even of the awful separation of soul and body. But this was not all: the torturing uncertainty of his fate was a bitter portion of his curse. He knew that there were two men in the world who could, at any time, doom him to disgrace and death; or, at least, if, by the precautions he had taken, their success in any attempt of the kind had been rendered doubtful, yet their knowledge of the dreadful secret of his state rendered all that he possessed—honour, fortune, rank, even to existence itself—precarious; and he felt, as he looked around him,

that he was living in a gilded dream which the next moment might vanish, and leave him to misery and despair.

At first, when, perhaps, it might have been in his power to implicate the gipsy as the murderer of his brother, and, by pursuing him as such, to have crushed one strong source of evidence against himself, two powerful causes had operated to deter him from such a course. He knew that Sir William Ryder, though implicated by accidental circumstances in his crime, was of too generous a nature to connive at any farther evil to which the desire of concealing it might lead him. But it would be doing him injustice not to say that he himself had shrunk from the very thought. His heart was not hardened enough for that: he felt that there was too much blood upon his hand already; and although the idea did cross his mind, yet at that time remorse was stronger than fear, and even had Sir William Ryder not existed, he would have chosen rather to bear apprehension than a greater load of regret.

Time, however, had now altered such feelings; he was accustomed to remorse: but no time can harden the heart to fear; and the first imagination which crossed his mind, when, at the end of twenty years, he again saw the gipsy, was to destroy him. The reader may recollect a conversation in the beginning of this work, wherein Pharold detailed the particulars of an interview he had had with the peer; and it may easily be conceived that from that interview Lord Dewry perceived at once that the moment was come when he must try his strength with those who had the power to injure him, and silence them for ever, or yield for ever to his fate; and with a strong determination, but a mind fearfully agitated, he instantly resolved to crush those he feared, if human ingenuity, backed by wealth, and power, and a daring disposition, could accomplish such an object.

Such had been the state of his mind when he so unexpectedly visited the house of Mrs. Falkland, and found new cause for apprehension in the conversation of Colonel Manners. But his coming thither had not for its sole object to meet and welcome his newly-returned son. He had learned, by instant and close inquiry after the gipsy had left him, that parties of his race had been seen lying in the neighbourhood of Morley Wood, with the view, it was supposed, of poaching on the open and ill-protected grounds in that district; and suspecting, from his conversation with Pharold, that on the refusal he had given, Sir William Ryder himself might return to England, he hastened over to his sister's house, which lay within a few miles of his property of Dimden, in order, if possible, to pursue means of destroying the actual witness of his crime, before the arrival of the only other person who even suspected it.

Let it not be supposed—although there were, in reality, no means at which Lord Dewry would now have hesitated to effect his purpose—that he deliberately, and boldly, and undisguisedly proposed to his own heart to bring about the gipsy's death. No, no: the great power of evil is too well aware how horrible his naked suggestions are not to furnish them with a veil, flimsy enough, it is true, but still sufficient to cover some part of their deformity. No! Lord Dewry only proposed—at least, he cheated himself into thinking so—to detect the gipsy or his comrades in some unlawful exploit, which might give an excuse for removing them for ever from the country, and at the same time might render any evidence they might tender against himself not only suspicious, but almost inadmissible.

The severe laws in regard to poaching, and the loose and lawless habits of the gipsies themselves, he doubted not would furnish the means; and his great object was to discover an offence of such magnitude, and to obtain proofs so clear, that great severity would be warranted, and the justice of the accusation undeniable. It might cross his mind that, in the pursuit of these views, a gipsy or a keeper might be killed; that the charge of murder might be added to that of poaching, and that a felony might rid him of the enemy of his repose for ever. Such a thing might cross his mind, and be viewed with no great dissatisfaction; but, at the same time, he denied to himself that such was his object. 'No: God forbid! but, if it did happen, he should, of course, take advantage of it to silence for ever the voice of one who had been witness to the *unfortunate accident* by which, in a moment of hasty passion, his brother had been deprived of life, and who seemed disposed to abuse the knowledge he unhappily possessed.

Such had been the thoughts of Lord Dewry as he travelled over to Mrs. Falkland's house on the night of his son's arrival; and such were the thoughts that again took possession of him as soon as the passion in which he had left her subsided on the following morning.

'With Sir William Ryder,' he thought, as the carriage rolled rapidly on towards Dimden,—'with Sir William Ryder I shall easily be able to deal single handed, if once I can remove his confederate. He used to be a simple, frank-hearted, foolish fellow; but I must, by some means, keep him from any farther meeting with Edward. I have already remarked that the boy sees there is some mystery; and a bare hint would waken suspicions that I would rather die than he should even dream of. But this man—this Pharold—must be my first care; and my next must be to procure such proofs of my having been in London at the time of my brother's death that suspicion itself shall be silenced, if either of the villains dare to open his lips.'

The manner in which this latter object was to be accomplished became the next consideration; but ere Lord Dewry could come to any determination upon the subject, the lodge of Dimden Park, and the old woman who opened the gates, courtesying to the ground as the carriage rolled through, met his eyes, and told him that he must reserve that matter for after thought.

The place that he was now entering had been the favourite habitation of his brother, where his days of happiness and sunshine had been past, and whence his virtues had made themselves felt and beloved through all the country round. There were many recollections and associations then connected with that spot, which, as it may easily be conceived, were not a little painful to the man who now entered it; and although he sometimes visited the house, and had once or twice in twenty years spent a day within its walls, yet he had never been able to vanquish the distress that the sight occasioned him so far as to live in it for any length of time. He now beheld it in a state which added to the pain whereof other circumstances had rendered it fruitful. It was not exactly going to ruin, for he had given strict orders and paid large annual sums for the express purpose of keeping the grounds in order and the house in repair; but those orders had been given from a distance, and had been received with a conviction that the master's eye would never inspect their execution very minutely. There were long tufts of grass in the walks and on the roads, though here and there was to be seen a faint and lazy effort to clear away, by the exertions of a few hours, the shameful negligence of many a day. Some of the trees, which had been felled years before, were rotting in the long dank grass; and the fences which had been placed to keep the deer within their proper bounds lay flat upon the ground, overturned and broken. The road over which the carriage rolled was channelled with deep, unmended ruts; and the fine old house, with its closed windows and smokeless chimneys, stood in its wide, open esplanade, like the palace of damp and desertion. Lord Dewry bit his lip, and muttered audibly, 'This must be amended. The scoundrels did not expect me to visit the place, and have been shamefully negligent. I will send them away.'

But as he thought thus, his other purposes crossed his mind, and brought with it one of those annoying and degrading convictions which so often follow evil actions and crooked policy. He felt that when he was about to engage his park-keepers in an action which his own heart told him was base, he could not dare to treat them severely for the faults they had themselves committed; and to a proud and violent man the restraint which he was obliged to put upon his passions was bitter enough. As the carriage approached the house, hasty symptoms of opening windows and unbarring doors showed that his coming had been remarked; and as he had no ambiguous commands to lay upon the old servants who had been left to keep the mansion in order, upon them fell the full weight of his indignation. When the first angry burst was over, he ordered the old man to call the principal park-keeper; and while he was absent upon that errand, strode gloomily through the dreary chambers, feeling his heart more dark and comfortless than even the long deserted apartments amidst which he stood. He then called for pen and ink, which, after some difficulty, he obtained, and wrote and despatched the note which we have seen delivered to Marian de Vaux.

At length the park-keeper appeared, a bold and sturdy fellow, with no inconsiderable portion of shrewd cunning in his countenance, to which had been superadded, at present, an air of dogged preparation, occasioned by the tidings of Lord Dewry's anger, which the old man had given him as they walked along towards the house.

'Harvey,' said the peer, as the man presented himself, 'you have suffered the park to get into a terrible state. I must have all this changed. Those fences must be put up—those trees cleared away—speak to Wilson about the road, and tell him if ever I see it in that state again, I shall discharge him, and—— do not answer me, but listen; for I came over to speak to you upon matters of more importance.—What are you waiting for, John?'

'I thought your lordship might want me,' said the old man who had lingered in the room.

'No, no, not I,' replied the peer; 'retire, and shut the door: but take care what you are about; for in future I shall come over, at least, every month: and if I find the house is not properly attended to after this warning, you and your wife go out of it without another word.—How, Harvey, tell me,' he continued, as the old man withdrew with a low and deprecating bow, 'have you many poachers here?'

'Why, no, my lord,' replied the park-keeper, his face brightening up to find that the anticipated storm had blown away. 'We have not had much of that work doing lately, though I dare say we soon shall have.'

'And why so?' demanded Lord Dewry. 'I am glad to hear that poaching is on the decrease. What makes you think it will revive again?'

'As to revive, my lord, why I don't know,' replied the man; 'but I doubt we shall soon have more of it—so I think. It's just the time, you see, my lord,—long moonlight nights, and a good deal of the out-door work over.'

The man paused; but these were not the reasons the peer had hoped to hear him assign for his apprehensions of more extended poaching, and found that he must bring him nearer to the point by some direct course. 'We have a great deal of poaching near the hall,' he said: 'Wise tells me that there are a number of bad characters continually in the woods, gipsies and thieves of all descriptions.'

'Ay, for the matter of that, we have gipsies enough, just now, too,' replied the keeper; 'and that's the reason, my lord, why I said I thought we should soon hear of more poaching: but I did not like to mention it, you see. Why there, I saw no longer ago than yesterday, up in Morley Wood I dare say a score of them—lazy beggars! Damn them, I hate those fellows, and so I told 'em—beg your lordship's pardon.'

Lord Dewry found that he was now on the right course; but, afraid of pursuing the matter

so eagerly as to cause suspicions which might, perhaps, tell against himself hereafter, he replied with a tranquil countenance, 'It would not surprise me if these were the same that have been plundering and poaching in a most desperate manner near the hall.'

'Oh, no doubt they are the same, my lord,' replied the keeper; and as to poaching, they were at it last night, or I have no ears: I heard a gun—I am sure I heard a gun—though I got up and went all over the grounds without finding them. But I heard a gun, I am sure enough of that, anyhow.'

'Oh, if that be the case,' said Lord Dewry, 'we must really take serious measures for their apprehension and conviction. They once murdered a gamekeeper, those gipsies, not far from here, and it is dangerous to honest men to let them be in the country.'

'Ay, that it is, my lord,' said the keeper; 'they'd murder any one as soon as look at him. They nearly murdered me once. I wish we could get rid of them, that I do, anyhow.'

'And so do I too,' replied Lord Dewry, solemnly; 'I do not like men's lives risked continually, nor their property plundered at every turn, solely because these gipsies are suffered to continue in the kingdom. I declare I would give fifty guineas to any one who could convict them in such a manner as to insure their being sent out of the country without fail. I do not like my people continually exposed to their attacks.'

'Your lordship is very kind and very generous,' said the keeper, 'and if your lordship would really give the fifty guineas, I daresay we could find some young fellows that would join in and take a hand in catching them.'

'But we must first be able to prove that they have committed some offence,' replied Lord Dewry, thoughtfully.

'Oh, they have committed offences enough, my lord,' answered the keeper; 'and if your lordship give fifty guineas, we shall soon have plenty to help in catching them.'

The peer paused for a moment or two without any direct reply; but he then answered, 'What I have said I mean, Harvey. The fifty guineas I would give, of course, to the man by whose means they were principally brought to justice; but I would do more, and pay handsomely every one concerned in actually taking them. Do you think they have ever shot any of the deer?' he added, after a short pause.

'No, my lord, no!' answered the keeper, fearful that blame might fall upon himself, 'I will answer for it they have not done that.'

'I am sorry for it,' said Lord Dewry, dryly. The man stared, and the peer proceeded:—'I am sorry for it, because, you see, Harvey, the offence would be the heavier, and we might get rid of them for ever if we could prove such a thing against them: whereas this poaching, especially if it be a first offence, will only take them out of the way for a time and then turn them back upon us more enraged against us than ever.'

'That is true, my lord, that's true,' replied the keeper, whose perceptions were sufficiently acute, and who began to see that his master had a very potent distaste to the race of gipsies, although his mind, proceeding in its habitual train, did not fail to conclude that the peer's motives for hating them were the same which would have actuated himself had he been in the peer's situation, namely, wrath at their having destroyed the peculiar objects of his veneration, game, and anger at their having outwitted him in his endeavours to preserve it. He went no farther in his investigations of his lord's designs, though he himself had peculiar motives of his own; but possessing goodly powers of detestation himself, he easily conceived that the baron would not scruple at any plausible stratagem for the purpose of obtaining his object. 'That's true, my lord, that's true,' replied he; 'but, do you know, I should not wonder if they did some night shoot a fat buck upon his moonlight walk; and I daresay, for the matter of that, we could get them to do it very soon.'

'Nay, nay,' cried the peer, in a tone of moderation, 'take care what you are about, Harvey, for if any one were to discover that you instigated them, you might get transported; and though, of course, I would take care that none of my servants was a loser by his zeal in my service, yet I should not like you to get into any scrape.'

'Your lordship is very kind,' said the man, 'but I will take care that I get into no scrape; and as to any one hearing me say anything about it, no fear of that, for I will never say a word to any one but your lordship; and but little will I say even now. But I know how to manage the matter; and if I can get some stout hands to help me, and the two under-keepers in taking the fellows, when once we have found out when they are about the job, I'll rid the country of them soon enough—a set of lazy, thieving beggars.'

'Why, Harvey,' said the peer, with a complacent smile, 'you do not seem fond of these gipsies, I think.'

'I fond of them, my lord!' said the man. 'No, no! I owe them an old grudge which I have long thought to pay. One of them nearly killed me once when I was a younker, now near twenty years ago, just for being a little over civil to one of their women. I might have had my revenge at the time, but I was weak and sick with the bruises, and I was spoony enough to let him get off; but he'll not do so again if I catch hold of him.'

'But pray, Harvey,' said the peer, 'how do you propose to obtain such information in regard to when and where these men are to be caught—for they must be caught in the fact, remark—as to enable you to seize them with any certainty? Do you know any of their gang personally?'

'Not I, my lord,' replied the man, 'but, do

you see, my lord, I know a man up in the village, called Harry Saxon, who hears a good deal about all those sorts of people, and I will get him just to put it into their heads to——'

'Hush, hush, Harvey,' interrupted the nobleman, but not in such a tone as to express much disapprobation. 'Do not tell me what you intend to do, but merely how you are to learn when and where to catch them.'

'Why, *he* will tell me all that, to be sure, my lord,' replied the keeper. 'He's a good sort of man, and won't disoblige me, I'll warrant.'

'And pray what is his usual occupation?' demanded the peer, in a casual way.

'Oh, he sells venison to the dealers in London,' replied the keeper; and then suddenly perceiving that he was on the edge of a precipice, he added, 'That is when any of the gentlemen in the neighbourhood want to kill off some of their bucks he buys them and sends them up to London. I have heard, too,' he continued, seeing that his lord listened with an unmoved countenance, as if to something of course,—'I have heard, too, that he sends up many a good brace of partridges, and many a pheasant and a hare; but he is a good sort of man upon the whole, and when he knows a keeper, like, he will not let the people poach and that upon the grounds that he keeps, and that's what makes us have so much game here. I'll warrant the game is better preserved here than anywhere else in the country.'

The peer made no observations upon these disjointed pieces of information; but in his own mind concluded, and not without reason, that his keeper was a very great scoundrel. He took care, however, neither by word, look, or action, to suffer the man he was making use of to perceive what sort of a character he was establishing in his opinion, being fully resolved in his own mind, however, to discharge him as soon after he had served the present purpose as might be found convenient.

Lord Dewry ended the conversation with the keeper by saying, 'Well, Harvey, well! I believe you are a very honest fellow. There are ten guineas for you to give the men you are obliged to employ,—an earnest of their reward,—and if you succeed in catching these gipsies, so as to convict them either of deer-stealing or aggravated poaching, you may count upon fifty guineas and my favour, besides having all your *bonâ fide* expenses paid.'

The man made a low bow, though he did not understand at all what *bonâ fide* meant, and the peer, with a slow step, walked to his carriage. The old man and woman who kept the house followed half a step behind, troubling him all the way by questions concerning the superintendence of the place, in regard to which their directions had been full and explicit years before, but by redemanding which they meant, as usual on such occasions, to insinuate a justification of their late negligence, implying that if they had been properly instructed they would have behaved better.

Short and severe were the replies of the Baron; and when the carriage-door was at length closed, and the vehicle rolled away, he sunk into thought, feeling that at least one part of his plan was in a fair way for execution, but feeling, likewise, deep, deep in his heart's core, the melancholy conviction—not the less poignant because he strove not to see it—that one crime was lashing him on with a fiery scourge to the commission of many more.

As he leaned back in his carriage, and with closed eyes thought of all the past and all the future, the mingling emotions that agitated his breast were dreadful indeed. Bitter, bitter remorse—strong, lasting, never-sleeping remorse—was for the moment paramount; and could he have seen any way of avoiding shame and death but by new evil, he would have resigned much, he would have resigned all, to follow it. But there was no means before him of escaping all the horrors that threatened, but either to destroy those he feared, or to destroy himself—he had but the choice of two great crimes; and the terrors of the endless future, aggravated by the condemnation of self-destruction, were too great for him to think of attempting his own life.

Such were some of the emotions which agitated his mind as the carriage rolled on towards his usual residence; but still the picture of them is but faint and imperfect, as every picture of agitated feelings must be. There were a thousand shades that escape the pen, a thousand sudden changes for which it would be difficult to account. Nevertheless, it must not be supposed that this varying and uncertain mood was the general state of his mind, when no outward circumstance had served to awaken antagonist feelings. On the contrary, he was generally firm in his despair, with remorse for the predominant tone of his whole sensations; but at the same time, with a stern determination to hold all that for which he had paid so deep a price, and to defend his own safety at any risk. It was only when some association, connected with other days, touched a tenderer point in his heart, and roused some better feelings from their sleep of years, that the winds and the tempests dashed against the dark dwelling-place of his spirit, and threatened to level it with its foundation in the sand. The mood seldom lasted long, however, and, indeed, could not have done so without driving him to frenzy.

On the next day but one, at a very early hour, Lord Dewry again drove over to Dimden, and had the pleasure of learning, by implications and hints from his head park-keeper, that the plan which had been shadowed out for entangling the gipsies was in a fair way for execution; and yet his spirit was ill at rest, for he felt that his plan was an imperfect one, and that at a thousand points it might fail. The gipsies might be too wary; and at all events Pharold was not likely to take part himself in such a scheme. If his companions were implicated, and he were to

escape, the natural consequence would be that his roused-up vengeance would take the ready means of sating itself by betraying the fearful secret that he possessed; and thus the attempt to remove him would but bring about, more certainly, the danger that was apprehended.

As he drove up to the door of the house, he remarked that one of his grooms was walking a hard-ridden horse up and down upon the gravel, while the dirty condition of the animal bespoke a long journey. As such sights, however, were not at all uncommon, and the horse might either belong to the steward or to some stranger come on a visit of curiosity to the house, it excited but little notice on the part of the peer, who was entering without inquiry, when one of the servants informed him that a gentleman was waiting his lordship's return in the small library. Lord Dewry turned a little pale; for there was a consciousness of danger and of the uncertainty of his condition at the heart of the peer, that caused the blood to forsake his cheek at any announcement of a visit, the import of which he did not know. He rebuked the servant, however, for admitting any one to wait for him during his absence; and ordered him never to do so again, adding, that when he expected or wished to see any one, he would always give intimation of his will.

The servant excused himself on account of the stranger's pressing and determined manner, motives which did not in the least reconcile the peer to his admission; but without any farther appearance of distrust, he walked with slow and stately steps to the library, and throwing open the door advanced towards a table, determined not to afford his unwished-for guest a pretext for sitting down by even approaching a chair himself.

The stranger's person merits some slight description, and even a more detailed account of his clothing than is required on ordinary occasions. He was a man, perhaps, four or five years younger than the peer himself, thin, light, active, with a twinkling grey eye, somewhat too full of moisture, and a number of those long radiating wrinkles, which, I believe, are called crows' feet, decorating the corners of the eyelids. His general complexion was white, of that dry and somewhat withered appearance which long habits of dissipation leave behind, when dissipation is not combined with drunkenness. In every glance there was a quick, sharp, prying expression, joined to a somewhat subservient smile, which was strangely enough displayed upon a cast of countenance, the natural expression of which was pertinacious effrontery.

His dress was well worn, and had not, apparently, been formed, originally, of any very costly materials; but it had, withal, a smart cut, and a smart look, which prevented the eye from detecting either the long services it had rendered, or the coarseness of the stuff. It was of a rather anomalous description too, consisting of what was then called a marone frock with a silver lace, a pair of buckskin breeches for riding in, thunder-and-lightning silk stockings, just showing their junction with the breeches above, and a pair of heavy boots; while ruffles, and a frill of that species of lace which, seeming all darns together, admits the most frequently of being mended, decorated his wrists and his bosom.

Lord Dewry gazed at him as he rose from the chair in which he had been sitting with a look which, if it did not absolutely express the stare of utter strangeness, had very few signs of recognition in it. But the other was neither to be abashed nor discomposed; and his manners, which were those of a gentleman, softened down a good deal of the effrontery which his demeanour displayed. Had he not been a gentleman, and in the habit of mingling with gentlemen, his determined impudence would have been insufferable; and, even as things were, that impudence, together with a certain affected swagger in tone and language, which was very generally assumed by the puppies of the day, and which the visitor caricatured, were quite sufficiently annoying, especially to such a man as Lord Dewry. Conceiving at once that the peer was not peculiarly delighted with his visit, the stranger advanced round the table, and with a low bow addressed him ere he had time to speak.

'I perceive,' he said, 'that the lapse of time which has occurred since we met, together with the accession of well-deserved fortunes and dignities, and the cares consequent thereupon, has obliterated from your memory, my lord, the person of a former friend. I must, therefore, announce myself as Sir Roger Millington.'

The peer bowed haughtily. 'I once,' he said, 'had some acquaintance with a person of that name; but, as you say, sir, the lapse of time has been so great since we have held any communication with each other, that I certainly did not expect it to be so suddenly renewed, and far less to be favoured with an unannounced visit at a time which, perhaps, may not be the most convenient.'

'My lord,' replied his companion, unrebuffed, 'I am happy to find that your lordship's memory extends to our acquaintance at least; and to refresh it in regard to the degree of that acquaintance, I think I could show you some letters in your lordship's hand beginning, some "My dear friend!" some "My dear Millington!" some "Damn it, my dear Millington!" with an elegant variety in the terms, whereby your lordship was kind enough to express your friendship for your humble servant.'

Lord Dewry coloured highly, between anger and shame; but he did not feel at all the more disposed to receive Sir Roger Millington kindly on account of these proofs of their former intimacy. He had not forgotten, any more than his visitor, that they had once been choice companions in both the elegant and inelegant debaucheries of a London life: but a great change in situation, and a total change in feelings, had made the peer as desirous of forgetting the past as the other was of recalling it; and he hated

him in proportion as he felt himself thwarted. Sir Roger Millington, however, had calculated his game with the utmost nicety; and the moment he perceived that the idea of their former friendship annoyed his noble host, he comprehended at once that nothing was to be obtained by gentler means, and determined, therefore, if possible, to force him to the object towards which he could not lead him. Such had been his motive in the somewhat pointed and galling manner in which he had repeated some of Lord Dewry's former expressions of regard, and he was not a little gratified to see the colour rise in his cheek as he spoke.

Lord Dewry's reply, however, which immediately followed, was not quite so much to his taste; for the peer also played his part skilfully; and though, in reality, as angry as Sir Roger desired, he concealed his anger, and replied in the same cold, haughty tone. 'You recall to me, sir,' he said, 'days of which I am heartily ashamed, scenes of which we have neither of us reason to be proud, and expressions which I greatly wish could be retracted.'

'I am sorry, as your lordship wishes it, that such a thing is not possible,' answered the persevering Sir Roger; 'but I think, if you will take a few moments to consider, your lordship may find reason to change some of your sentiments. I may have become an altered man as well as Lord Dewry; and, if so, his lordship will have no cause to hate or shun an old friend, because he once followed in a course which his lordship led, and has since followed in his repentance. I hear that a mutual friend of your lordship's and my own is coming to England soon, if not already on his way, from America, —I mean Sir William Ryder; and I should be sorry to have to tell him on his return that your lordship casts off your old acquaintances. You had better consider of it, my lord.'

'I shall consider nothing, sir,' replied the peer, 'except that my time is too valuable to be wasted in idle discourse, which can end in nothing; and, therefore, I have the honour of wishing you good-morning.' Thus saying, he stood for about the space of a minute and a half, expecting Sir Roger to leave the room; but being disappointed, he himself turned upon his heel, with a curling lip and a flashing eye, and quitted the library, leaving the door open behind him.

Sir Roger Millington stood for a moment or two in some embarrassment, but at length impudence and necessity prevailed. 'No,' cried he; 'no; damn it, it will never do to be beaten when one has resolved on such an attack. Curse me, if I don't die in the breach, like other heroes. Why, if I cannot raise a hundred or two, I'm done, that's clear. No, no: I'll not stir;' and casting himself down into a chair, he coolly took up a book, and began to read,

CHAPTER XV.

LORD DEWRY'S VISITOR.

'To be teased with such an insolent scoundrel at such a moment as this!' thought the peer, as he strode hastily to his usual sitting-room: 'it is insufferable! I have a great mind to order the villains that let him in to horsewhip him out again for their pains; I believe that they will some day drive me mad amongst them!' and stamping his foot upon the ground, as was his custom when very angry, he clenched his thin hand as if he would have struck the object of his indignation. Suddenly, however, stopping in the midst of his passion, he fell into deep thought, which kept him standing in the middle of the room for two or three minutes; then approaching the bell, he rang it calmly. His own valet, whose peculiar province was to attend to that especial sitting-room, appeared in less time than ordinary. 'Is the gentleman who was in the little library gone?' demanded the peer.

'No, my lord,' replied his laconic attendant.

'I shall dine in the larger room to-day,' said Lord Dewry; 'bid Mr. Scott have the table laid for two, and tell *le chef* that the dinner must be different.'

The man bowed and withdrew; and the peer, after pausing for a single moment where he was, re-opened the door, and proceeded through the neighbouring gallery to a vestibule, whence his eye could rest upon the door of the room in which he had left Sir Roger Millington. Here again, however, he paused even for several minutes; and then, raising his head, which had been sunk somewhat upon his bosom, he walked on with a calm, dignified step towards the room which he had quitted not a quarter of an hour before in such great indignation. Sir Roger Millington was seated exactly in the chair which had received his person when the peer left him, and was deeply, and apparently pleasantly, engaged with the book he had taken up. So perfectly comfortable, indeed, did he seem to have made himself, that Lord Dewry, notwithstanding strong determinations to the contrary—the motives of which will be explained immediately—could scarcely refrain from kicking him through the glass door into the park. He conquered his passion, however; and, in a tone which was very different from that which he had used towards the same person a quarter of an hour before, but which was still sufficiently guarded by haughty coldness to prevent the transition from appearing excessively abrupt, he addressed his visitor once more. 'Sir Roger Millington,' he said, 'I am glad to find that you are not gone; for a little reflection makes me regret having treated a former acquaintance somewhat hastily; but the truth is, your arrival has occurred at a moment when I am not only extremely busy, but also when my feelings have been irritated and hurt by various occurrences which may in some degree have made me forget my courtesy.'

'Come, come,' thought Sir Roger Millington, 'matters are improving. Some fools would have gone away ashamed or affronted. There is nothing like knowing when to keep one's ground, when to beat a retreat. My lord,' he continued aloud, 'it gives me the greatest pain to think that I have intruded upon you at such a moment. But I am quite ready to repair my fault by retiring, only requesting your lordship to name some hour to-morrow when I can have the honour of conversing with you on matters of some importance.'

Of importance to yourself or to me, Sir Roger?' demanded the peer, forcing a half smile, though there had been something in the pertinacity with which his visitor had held his ground that made him almost apprehend that these matters of importance might refer in some unpleasant manner to himself.

Had Sir Roger Millington had the slightest means whatever of showing that the matters of which he had to speak were in any degree relative to the peer, he would have ventured the assertion that they were of importance to him; but as he had not, he judged it expedient to be candid in the more placable mood which his noble host now displayed, and he accordingly answered, 'Of more importance to myself, my lord, I am afraid, than to you.'

It was a lucky hit, however, for this proceeding not only quieted all Lord Dewry's apprehensions, but also favoured his views in other respects.

'I am glad to hear it, Sir Roger,' replied the baron, 'for, to say the truth, I have important business of my own enough upon my hands to tire me of it, and I would rather speak upon any one else's affairs than have any more of myself. But you must not think of leaving the hall, though I am afraid I must be absent from you a considerable part of the day. I shall expect the pleasure of your company for a few days, and I will order my servant to conduct you to your apartments. You must amuse yourself as best you may till the evening. Here are books enough, you see, if you have turned student; and if you are still fond of field sports, the gamekeeper will show you where you may find plenty of game. Use the house as your own, I beg; but only excuse the master of it for a few hours.'

'My lord, your lordship is too good, too kind,' replied his companion, bowing low and lower; 'but——'

'Oh, I understand,' said the peer, 'you have ridden here, and have not dressing materials. Never mind, we will cast away ceremony, Sir Roger.'

'But if any one could be sent over to the village of Barholm, my lord,' said Sir Roger, 'since your lordship is so very good, they would find my valise at the inn.'

'Certainly, certainly,' said the peer, increasing in courtesy at every response,—'certainly, we will see about it directly;' and he rang the bell once or twice with that air of good-will which was well calculated to wipe away the memory of any former coldness.—'Richard,' he said, as soon as a servant appeared, 'send over the errand-boy on horseback directly to Barholm, and bid him inquire for the things Sir Roger Millington has left there at the inn. Bid the groom look to Sir Roger's horse, and then come here to show him to the Yellow Room. Attend upon him while he does me the pleasure of remaining here, and see that everything is supplied properly.—Now, Sir Roger, I must beg you to excuse me for a short time; but I shall have the pleasure of seeing you at dinner.'

Sir Roger bowed low, the peer withdrew, and the servant saying, 'I will be back in a minute, sir, to show you to your apartments,' followed to give the orders he had received to the errand-boy and the under-groom.

Sir Roger Millington cast himself back into his chair, mentally declaring, ''Pon my soul, he seems a devilish good fellow, after all, somewhat hasty, and hellish proud, but better at bottom than he lets himself appear. I should not wonder if this card, which, by ——, is the last in my hand, should turn up a trump after all. Egad! that would be queer!'

Such were his first reflections, and he had not time to proceed much beyond them, when the servant re-appeared and begged him to follow. The visiter immediately complied, and walking through a suite of handsome rooms, where gold lace, and damask, and pictures, and cabinets, and brass, and tortoiseshell, and marble, combined to form a very dazzling assemblage of furniture and decorations, he was led up a fine flight of stairs to another story, where, through corridors scarcely less handsomely garnished than the apartments below, he was conducted, murmuring, 'What a splendid house!' to a spacious bed-room and dressing-room, adorned with yellow damask hangings, and supplied with everything at which luxury had yet arrived in the days whereof we speak. Here, after asking his farther commands, the servant left him, and Sir Roger Millington threw himself on one of the sofas, asking, 'Well, what the devil can the fellow want?—for want something he certainly does. However, no matter—all the better for me. I'm the man for his money, whatever he wants; and, by Jupiter, I'll take good care not to quarrel with the sort of bread and butter that is to be got in this house.'

Leaving Sir Roger Millington to speculate upon such very natural propositions, we may as well follow the peer once more to his private room, and endeavour to ascertain the cause of a change in his demeanour towards the poor knight, which had been, as we have seen, no less sudden than complete.

No sooner had he entered the chamber than he closed the door and bolted it, approached a small iron chest which stood rivetted to the floor and to the wall, and opening it with a key which was attached to a strong gold chain round his neck, he folded his arms upon his

breast, and gazed in for a moment, biting his lip and straining his eye as if it required no small powers of self-command to proceed any farther. He then drew forth a large holster pistol richly embossed with silver—the fellow to that which had been placed in the hands of Edward de Vaux by the gipsy Pharold—and held it for a time in his hand, with his eyes not fixed upon it, but upon some far object in the distant landscape, which, nevertheless, he saw not in the least, for the intensity of the mind's occupation at that moment had broken for the time the connection between the intellectual soul and her servants, the corporeal senses; so that his eye was as blind to the things on which it was fixed as if it had been seared by lightning. His thoughts were far away—in other years, and in other scenes; and as he laid the weapon down upon a chair beside him, he murmured, 'It *must* have fallen into the river, or it would have been found with the hat.'

He then sought for a moment amongst some papers, from which he selected one, and replacing everything in the chest as it had been before, turned to the table and gazed upon the sheet, which seemed alone filled with memoranda of dates and numbers that certainly could possess no meaning to any eye but his own. To him, however, their import seemed of great consequence, for again and again he studied them, and ever and anon the contemplation would plunge him into deep fits of thought, from which he only roused himself again to gaze upon the figures as before.

'It will do,' he said, at length; 'but I must take care of what I am about. Yet of this Roger Millington there is no fear. He would at any time of his life have condemned his own soul for gold, and now he seems beggared and wretched enough. The other people can offer him nothing: I can offer him ease and luxury; and he will not only have no temptation to betray me, but every inducement to keep my secret till the grave closes over us both. And yet,' he added, thoughtfully,—'and yet I must not put it in his power ever to annoy me hereafter. He must rest in my power rather than I in his. Yet if we can silence this Pharold for ever, all real danger will be past; and I must risk something—I must risk much, for that object.'

Such were some of the thoughts which passed through the mind of Lord Dewry; nor were his conclusions formed upon a very wrong estimate of the character of his present visitor. The better qualities of Sir Roger Millington were few. The best of them was personal courage, or rather that total thoughtlessness in regard to death, and what is to follow death, which in many men supplies the place of a nobler principle. He had always, too, been what is called generous; and he did, indeed, possess that curious combination of qualities which makes a man pillage and ruin the father of a family, and thus bring want, destruction, and desolation upon a whole household, while at the same time he is willing, on every occasion, to share the ill-gotten wealth of the moment with any one who needs it. His generosity, however, still more displayed itself in wasting, amongst debauchees like himself, whatever he possessed, and thinking no means ignoble to dissipate what he had thought no means dishonourable to obtain.

Born of a good family, introduced early into the best society, and placed as a military man, in a situation which should have acted rather to strengthen honourable principles than to lead him from them, he had at first, so long as the actual war lasted, gained some credit and renown as a soldier; but no sooner had a peace succeeded than various gambling transactions, of a somewhat doubtful character, rendered it expedient that he should quit the service. This he was permitted to do without disgrace; but from that hour his progress had been downwards in fortune and society. He had first mingled with gentlemen upon equal terms, and during the greater part of his acquaintance with Lord Dewry, had kept himself on the same footing with his companions, by keeping up the same expenses, and by indulging the same vices. He was often very successful at play; and, though it was reported that his scruples were not very great in regard to the experience or the sobriety of those with whom he sat down, as his winnings enabled him, generally, to live in luxury and splendour, there were few found to object to the means of acquirement. He sometimes lost, however, and as, on one or two occasions, his losses had been to persons of greater wealth than courage, he was said to have discharged his debt by lending the use of his sword in some of the numerous disputes which vice and debauchery entail upon their disciples.

All these things were suspected, but still Sir Roger Millington was not, on that account, shut out from society. Some people merely thought that in him they knew where to find a *serviceable man* when they wanted such a thing, and others did not choose to quarrel with one who was in better repute at the Park or the back of Montague House, the two great resorts of duellists in that day, than in St. James's Street. Gambling, however, is always a losing trade: and, by slow degrees, and with many a brief revival of fortune, Sir Roger Millington was forced down lower and lower in the scale of reputation and estate. It must be a very honourable spirit, indeed, that poverty renders more scrupulous; and such was certainly not the case with Sir Roger Millington. The means of obtaining money seemed to him all honourable if they led him not to Tyburn, and at length he would fight with or for any man, for a very trifling consideration. By this trade, varied, where he found it necessary, by sycophancy or by impudence, he contrived for some time to keep himself up, till at length some one of his adversaries, more wise than the

rest, took courage to refuse to cross swords with a bully and a sharper, horsewhipped Sir Roger when he posted him, fought and wounded the first man of honour that looked cold on him for his conduct, and left Sir Roger Millington no resource but to quit the circles in which he had been formerly received.

These circumstances had occurred about two years before the knight's visit to Lord Dewry; and it would be more painful and disgusting than amusing or instructive to follow him through the shifts and turnings of the succeeding months. At length the happy thought struck him which we have seen him execute; and with a horse, the last of a once splendid stud, a valise, containing all that remained of his wardrobe, three guineas and some silver in his purse, a vast stock of impudence, and a packet of the peer's old letters, he set out to see whether he could wring anything either from the weakness or the kindness of Lord Dewry, from whom he had won, in former days, many a sum which he now sighed to think upon.

He came, as we have seen, at the very moment when the assistance of such a person as himself, who was not in the least scrupulous either in regard to oaths or dangers, was likely to prove most serviceable to the peer, provided that any bonds could be invented, so close and clinging as to restrain a man who had never yet been bound by any principles of religion, morality, or honour. On their meeting the uses to which he might be put had not at first struck Lord Dewry, and he had given way to the irritable impatience natural to his character; but the last words of Sir Roger Millington concerning Sir William Ryder had struck a chord of association which soon awoke other ideas, and before the peer had reached his own room, he had seen and comprehended the variety of services which Sir Roger might render him.

Now Lord Dewry was a shrewd and strong-minded man, who, as far as a violent and proud disposition and very uncontrollable passions would let him, generally acted upon a regularly-arranged and well-considered system in everything he undertook; but it is extraordinary how often a man acts upon system without knowing it; for, after all, we are but mere puppets, body and mind, in the hands of our desires. Lord Dewry had ordered the beggared and threadbare Sir Roger Millington to be taken to one of the most splendid apartments in his splendid house; he had ordered such an intimation to be given to the cook as would place upon the table a rich and luxurious repast; he had directed that repast to be spread in a room full of magnificence; and now he dressed himself with scrupulous care and elegance, without at all being aware that it was all part of a system to re-awaken in the bosom of the penniless knight that thirst for luxury and ease which would render him most willingly and eagerly the tool of him who could bestow it. So it was, however; and though pride had her word, too, and told his lordship that such display would make his visitor more humble and respectful, yet the principal object was to show him how many pleasant and desirable things might be obtained, by being the very humble and most devoted servant of the noble lord.

Had Lord Dewry sat and calculated for an hour what system was most likely to produce the desired effect upon a man of the peculiar mental and bodily idiosyncrasy of Sir Roger Millington, he could not have more happily adapted his actions to the circumstances. In his high and plumy days of fortune, Sir Roger Millington had learned to love and delight in every good thing of the earth that we inhabit, and in his days of debasement and poverty he had equally learned to admire and bow down to, in others, the possession of those things which had given him so much pleasure when he possessed them himself. The soft tread of the Turkey carpets, the sight of damask, and lace, and ormolu, an accidental whiff of the distant kitchen, as he passed the top of a back staircase,—a whiff faint and fragrant as if it came from 'the spice islands in the south,'—the very feel of the sofa on which he sat, were all so many arguments in favour of any plan, action, or idea which Lord Dewry could possibly suggest; and when, after having received his goods and chattels from the village, selected the best of his wardrobe, and made himself look, as he could do, perfectly gentlemanly, he descended to the drawing-room, it was with an impression of the greatest possible respect and admiration for his noble entertainer.

He was almost immediately joined by the peer, who was surprised but not sorry to see his guest look so much like a gentleman; for though he sincerely desired that he should be such at heart, as to do his unscrupulous bidding unscrupulously, yet he was quite willing to have him such, in appearance, as would excite neither wonder nor animadversion.

Hasty as the peer was by nature, and eager as he was in the present instance, he had acquired sufficient command over himself to reserve any more open communication with Sir Roger till a more proper moment; although, had he given way to the impulse of his own heart, he would have entered upon the business which occupied his thoughts at once. But he felt what an advantage such a course of action would confer upon his guest; and, therefore, without showing the slightest haste or impatience, he spoke a moment or two upon the weather, and the state of the nation, and the alarming increase of crime in the metropolis, and several other things, about which he cared not in the least, and then turned to some of the pictures that hung upon the walls, expatiating upon their various merits with as much learning as a connoisseur, and as much taste as an Agar Ellis.

The doors were thrown open while he still spoke, and dinner was announced; nor did Lord Dewry, during the whole course of the

meal, deviate from the rule he had laid down, of hurrying his communication by neither word nor hint. The dinner itself was such as might be expected from his fortune and his habits,—abundant, but not loaded, showing every delicacy that wealth could procure, and yet taking care that, as in the Palace of the Sun, the workmanship should excel the materials. The wines, however, surpassed everything else; and that sort of nectar which is called *sec sillery* once again greeted the palate of Sir Roger Millington, after many years of tedious interval. Sir Roger blessed the stars which had conferred so many good things on a man to whom he hoped to render service; for though he neither eat nor drank to excess, he enjoyed to the full, and saw the dessert placed upon the table only with the expectation of, at length, hearing how he might merit a participation in such blessings in future.

The best polished crystal, full of the liquid rubies of rich Medoc, was set upon the table; and the majestic butler drew off after the retiring footmen. Lord Dewry recommended the claret; and when he saw the glass filled, he opened his approaches cautiously.

'Now, Sir Roger,' he said, 'we have all the evening before us, without fear of interruption; and though I trust you will give me the pleasure of your company some days longer, yet, as you spoke of some matter which was of importance to you, it may be pleasanter to us both to get rid of the business at once, and devote the rest of our time to less weighty affairs.'

Sir Roger had not prepared for this way of opening the campaign; and he felt some fear that any demand upon the purse of his noble host might banish him from a dwelling where he felt himself as yet quite comfortable. A moment's thought, however, reassured him; for, both from his general knowledge of the world, and his particular knowledge of the peer, he felt very sure that such a sudden transition from rudeness to hospitality, as we have heretofore recorded, could not have taken place without a motive—that motive he concluded to be a desire of reaping advantage from some of his numerous and pliant abilities; and he therefore perceived that the policy now was to make a bargain as best he might. All this train of argumentation was run over rapidly in his brain, and he then replied, 'The fact is, my lord, that some of my old evil habits have, as your lordship may have anticipated, somewhat impaired my property, and put me to temporary difficulties. Such being the case, and being rather rudely pressed, I bethought me of your lordship's former kindness and liberality; and came down in haste to see whether I could not induce you to favour me with the loan of a small sum.'

'A loan!' exclaimed the peer, raising his eyebrows as if something quite unexpected had broke upon his ear, though there was the dawning of a half-suppressed smile about his lip that contradicted his tone of surprise,—'a loan! Ah, I dare say we can manage that matter, Sir Roger. But be candid with me; tell me the state of your finances: it shall not injure your views, upon my honour!'

'Bad enough, my lord, bad enough!' replied his companion, candidly, and yet shrewdly; for he began to fancy that candour would be best: 'bad enough, I am sorry to say. I have had a sad run against me, and have not been able to get over it.'

'No heavy debts?' said the peer.

'No, upon my honour, no,' replied Sir Roger; 'I do not owe twenty pounds in the world; but I find a difficulty in getting one.'

'That was always an extraordinary trait of yours, Millington,' said the peer; 'you were never in debt, though you spent a good deal, and played high.'

'Because I always paid away my money as fast as I got it,' replied his guest. 'As soon as I had a sum any one might have it that wanted it, whether a tradesman or a friend; and as I had large sums then,' he added, with a sigh, 'I was never long in debt.'

This was, indeed, partly true of the times to which he referred, as the peer well knew; and the reason for his having few debts, in later years, was still more simple, though he mentioned it not—it was, that no one would trust him. Lord Dewry, however, seemed affected by his reference to old times, and replied, 'Well, well, Sir Roger, we will not let you be hard pressed any longer. What is the sum you at present want?'

Sir Roger Millington hesitated between the fear of asking too much, and asking too little; and he would have given the three guineas that graced his pocket willingly to have found out what service was to be demanded of him in return, that he might shape his request accordingly. 'It cannot be to fight,' he thought; 'the fellow used to do all that business for himself, and devilish well too! but, however, it must be some pitiful job indeed, if it is not worth a couple of hundred. I'll ask fifty more. Why,' my lord,' he said aloud, 'the fact is, that two hundred and fifty pounds, I am afraid, will be requisite.'

'Well, well,' said Lord Dewry, who, thinking chiefly of Sir Roger's former style of living, had calculated upon a demand of at least double that amount—'that can be managed; and upon my honour it *shall* be managed: but now let us speak a little upon other matters.'

'Now it comes!' thought Sir Roger Millington; but the peer proceeded: 'I have now promised you this sum unconditionally; but if you will explain to me more fully the real and particular state of your finances, perhaps we may strike out something that may prove ultimately still more beneficial to you—I mean permanently beneficial.'

Sir Roger Millington sat with his eyes wide open, and the internal voice of his wonder would have been, could any one have heard it, 'Why what's the meaning of all this? Is he going to turn out really generous after all?'

He had recourse to the claret jug, however, which soothed him wonderfully; and he answered, 'Why, my lord, as I have already said, the state of my finances is bad—very bad! In short, my lord, there is nothing which you can do to mend them, that will not be most gratefully received by Roger Millington.'

'We must think of it, Sir Roger,' replied the peer; 'and you will find, Sir Roger, that no man will do more than I will to remove you from all difficulties, and put you at your ease. The worst point of the whole business is, I am afraid that all I can do for you is but for my own life. My estates are strictly entailed. I live up to my income; and I am afraid that with me would die anything that I could annually do for you.'

'May your lordship live for ever!' replied Sir Roger, with more sincerity, perhaps, than ever courtier offered such an aspiration in favour of the kings of the Medes and Persians. 'The truth is, my lord,' he continued, 'nothing can be worse than the state of my present fortunes. I certainly did not doubt being able to mend them with a little assistance; but if you carry into execution your kind intentions in my favour, and mend them for me, all I can say is, that you shall find one man at least grateful in this world; and I hope also that you will point out to me some means of aiding you in return, for the burden of my obligation to you will be greatly relieved by being able to show my zeal in your service.'

'Oh, we will think of that hereafter,' said Lord Dewry; 'and as you are a man of taste and ingenuity, I have no doubt, Sir Roger, in the various changes and alterations which I am making here and at Dimden, I have no doubt that we shall be able to find you employment of a nature the most agreeable to your feelings, and the most suitable to your mind. Nobody need know anything of the pecuniary arrangements between us. You shall always be received here as a friend; and the rest of your days may pass in sunshine and enjoyment.'

These were prospects bright indeed to the view of the impoverished knight; and as he felt that no services on his part would be too great or too unscrupulous to merit such reward, he very plainly gave his noble entertainer to understand that such was the case, and explained to him how willing he would be to undertake any task he chose to impose. This was the plainest speaking which had been held during the evening; and the peer was not sorry that it had come on the part of his guest, for he was anxious now to arrive at the point, and yet he decidedly wished that the way might be smoothed for him. He smiled most graciously, therefore, as he replied, 'Well, well, Sir Roger, your offers shall soon be put to the proof. I have upon my hands, at the present moment, some business which is very difficult to manage; and as I know you to be both firm and skilful, I will request your assistance in it. But remember, I beg, that my object, as I shall explain to you immediately, is perfectly just and upright; and although the business wants a little shrewd management, yet it is one in which you may engage conscientiously.'

'I doubt it not, my lord,' replied Sir Roger, who, perhaps, in all the variety of human actions, would have found very few in which, under his present circumstances, he would not have engaged quite conscientiously,—'I doubt it not, my lord, pray proceed.'

'Oh, it is a long story,' answered the Baron; 'and before we proceed to that, let me ask you, Sir Roger, if you remember, with any degree of accuracy, the transactions which took place between you and me and Sir William Ryder in regard to a large sum of money that we lost to you in the year 17—?'

'Perfectly, most perfectly, my lord,' replied Sir Roger. 'My memory never fails on such points; I could swear to every fact.'

'Then do you remember,' said the peer, 'receiving a note from me on the eighteenth of May, telling you, that if you would wait another week, I would pay you the whole sum at once, as my brother would be able by that time to call in money to lend me, and do you remember your coming to me the same evening to say that you were quite willing to wait, and our going out together to a party?'

'I remember it all accurately, my lord,' replied the poor knight, to whom the recollection of days when the proud man before whom he now sat had been his debtor and his humble servant was too gratifying to be easily forgotten, —'I remember it all well—every particular; but you are mistaken in the date, my lord. It was the nineteenth, not the eighteenth, of May.'

'No, no, it is you who are mistaken, Sir Roger,' replied the peer with a meaning smile. 'It was the eighteenth, I can assure you.'

Sir Roger did not comprehend. 'Indeed, my lord,' he replied, 'it was the nineteenth; I remember it from many circumstances. On that very morning the great bet had come off between Colonel Hammerstone and the Nailer, and——'

'Nay, nay, I am positive,' said the peer, 'from circumstances that I cannot forget either. It was the eighteenth day of May in the year 17—.'

'But, my lord, I have your lordship's own note,' said Sir Roger, persevering.

'Have you so?' cried the peer; 'I wish you would be so kind as to let me see it.'

'Certainly, my lord, I will bring it in a moment,' said Sir Roger; and rising from his chair he left the room in order to bring the paper to which he referred. While he was gone Lord Dewry sat silent and stern, with his hand over his eyes and the upper part of his face; but his lips, which were uncovered, moved as if he were speaking, and the working of the muscles of his cheeks seemed to indicate that he was in bodily pain. As soon as his guest returned, however, he withdrew his hand, and all was clear and smiling, except, perhaps, a slight contraction of the brow, and an anxious intensity of gaze in

his eye, which had both become habitual. Sir Roger Millington resumed his place; and, laying down upon the table a bundle of papers which he carried, he selected one, and presented it to the peer, saying, 'There, my lord, is the note.'

Lord Dewry received it calmly, not only because he knew the contents exactly as well as Roger Millington, but because he felt perfectly satisfied that Sir Roger himself was secured—bound hand and foot his slave, by promises and expectations which no one else had the power or the necessity of holding out to him. The paper, though it bore the marks of age in the yellow hue of its complexion, and the paleness of the ink, was in other respects well preserved; and the peer, unfolding it, perused it attentively, and still held it in his hand when he had done.

'I see, Sir Roger,' he said, 'that you are correct as far as the dating of this note goes; but at the same time I can assure you I must have dated it wrong at the time by some unfortunate mistake, which mistake, by an unpleasant concatenation of circumstances, might prove of the greatest disadvantage to me at present, and might even deprive me of the power of assisting you in the way that I am so desirous of doing.'

The master key of self-interest instantly unlocked the door of Sir Roger Millington's understanding; and he now saw that some very strong motive must influence the peer in wishing to prove that the letter was written on a different day from that on which it was dated. He consequently determined at once that it should be written on any day whatsoever that his lordship thought fit; but at the same time, having a due regard to the friable nature of promises, he extremely desired to make himself master of his noble friend's secret views, in order to have some check upon him hereafter. 'Indeed, my lord,' he replied, in a tone of much concern, 'I am sorry to hear that the fact should be likely to produce such result. May I inquire how such an unfortunate state of things is likely to ensue from so simple a circumstance?'

'Oh, certainly,' replied Lord Dewry, with somewhat of a sarcastic smile; 'you may inquire, and I will answer you, Sir Roger: but then, if I do, I must, I am afraid, demand a bond for the two hundred and fifty pounds I am about to advance, as I must either have security for my money or my secrets—which you like, Sir Roger.'

'Oh, then, my lord,' replied Sir Roger Millington, inclining his head with a significant bow, 'the matter is very simple. As I have no security to offer for the money, I will beg not to burden myself with your lordship's confidence any farther than you think absolutely necessary; and in regard to the note which is likely to produce results so unlucky to both you and me—for I am fain to believe that my prosperity is now intimately connected with your lordship's—I think the best way to settle the matter will be to put it in the fire.'

'I do not exactly know that,' answered Lord Dewry, musing; 'at all events, let me convince you first that it was written on the eighteenth instead of the nineteenth.'

'My lord, I am already convinced,' said Sir Roger Millington, who, once having obtained the cue, could go on without the prompter:—'I am already convinced,—I see my mistake. I remember it was the day before the great walking bet came off, which was on the nineteenth, at Hounslow. Indeed, it is impossible that it could have been otherwise; for I was present on the ground all day; and if I was at Hounslow all day, I could not receive your note in London.'

'True, true,' said the peer, though he very well knew that the note which he had written after his return to town, the very day subsequent to his brother's death, had found Sir Roger just come back from Hounslow: 'true, true, Sir Roger; and doubtless you could swear to all these facts, should it be necessary?'

'Beyond all doubt, my lord,' replied the knight; 'circumstances crowd upon my memory, which all tend to show that your lordship is right; and it must have been the mistaken date of the note which deceived me.'

'Would it not, then, be advisable,' demanded the peer, 'to rectify the date which the note bears, instead of destroying it—hey, Sir Roger, hey?'

'Certainly, my lord, certainly,' said Sir Roger; and then, dropping his voice, he added, in a half whisper, 'if it can be done without the chance of discovery.'

'Easily,' replied the peer; 'easily, Sir Roger; a little acid, which I have in my library, will take out the tail of the nine without leaving a trace; there will then be only a cipher, which I will alter to an eight; so that no one will see a difference between the writing of that figure and the rest of the letter. You and I—the only persons concerned in a private letter from me to you—are both convinced that the date ought to be so rectified; and no one else need know anything about it.'

'I am perfectly of your lordship's opinion,' replied Sir Roger; 'had it not better be done immediately?'

'With all my heart,' replied the peer; 'follow me, Sir Roger; we will return here, and conclude our claret when we have done.'

The serviceable Sir Roger followed without another word to the peer's private room. A small bottle of acid was produced, which answered its object fully; the obnoxious figure was changed into a more convenient one, with ink mingled with water, to render it of the same hue as the rest of the writing, and the most severe and practised eye could not have detected a change. When it was done, the peer and his confederate stood gazing upon the paper with very different feelings: Sir Roger, totally indifferent to all considerations of right and wrong in the matter, only wondering what was to come next, and desirous of knowing whether he himself was to resume possession of the letter, or whether his noble host intended to keep it for

his own purposes; Lord Dewry feeling at his heart that blessed sensation of security which he had not known for twenty years.

The peer's next act was calmly to take his pocket-book from his pocket: and drawing forth five notes, amounting to the sum which Sir Roger had demanded, he laid them, one after another, down upon the paper which they had been corrupting, and then, taking up the whole packet, he put it into his companion's hand. 'Sir Roger,' he said, 'I always like to be as good as my word; and often endeavour to prove myself better than my word. In regard to these notes,' he added, seeing the knight about to pour forth thanks, 'let us say no more about them; and in regard to this note,' pointing to the one they had altered, 'let me beg you to put it by carefully with the rest of my letters; and should you ever be called upon to produce it and speak about it, you will remember the fact accurately, that it was received by you on the eighteenth of May—the day before the great bet came off at Hounslow. Also, you will remember that you called upon me in answer to it, and that we sat together for half an hour. But it may be as well to forget, perhaps, that we went out in company to Hillier's party. Let all statements be as simple as possible, with no more circumstances than are necessary to show that you do really remember the facts, and now let us return to our claret, for we have more to talk of yet, both concerning your affairs and mine.'

Sir Roger bowed low, promising to act exactly as he was instructed. 'You know I have been a soldier, my lord,' he said, 'and am well aware of the necessity of obeying orders without the slightest variation.'

The peer led the way back to the dining-room, and rang for more claret, though there was a good deal still upon the table; but the cause was, in truth, that he desired a moment or two to think farther before he continued his conversation with Sir Roger Millington. His original design had been to employ him in a much more extensive and conclusive enterprise than he had hitherto broached to him; but in the very initiatory steps, the fact of the letter being still in existence, the facility which Sir Roger had shown in bending to his wishes, and the certainty of his following exactly the directions he had received, seemed to remove the necessity for farther efforts. 'I have now,' thought the peer, 'the most perfect and conclusive proof to adduce that I was in London on the very day of my brother's death; and granting that the oath of Sir Roger Millington may be somewhat doubted, on account of his established character, the letter—the letter—is proof positive. Besides, what can be opposed to it but the oath of a gipsy and a gambler; neither of them worth more than his, if so much. The letter is conclusive. Perhaps it may be as well to let the gipsy alone; and yet it is not to be longer endured—this state of momentary apprehension of what the next minute is to produce. Nor can there be any doubt, that, as soon as Pharold finds out this business in regard to the deer-stealing—which has gone too far by this time to be stayed—his first vengeance will be to tell all, and I may as well be prepared to cast the charge back upon himself. Besides, if I can crush him before the other arrives in England, I may set the whole world at defiance.'

As he thought thus, he drank a large glass of claret. There never yet was man who committed a great crime, and did not henceforth feel that the predominant longing of his soul was once more to be able to 'sleep in spite of thunder.' He drank another full glass: and then went on, determined to bring the struggle to an issue at once, now that he had all his preparations made, and was sure of the result.

'What we have just been speaking of, Sir Roger,' he said as the servant shut the door after setting down the claret, 'brings to my mind our former acquaintance, Sir William Ryder. I should scarcely think that he proposes to come back again to this country, as you hinted this morning, considering that he left many a debt unpaid. Amongst other things, you know he was your debtor in the transaction of which we but now spoke, as well as myself, though not to the same amount; and you are, doubtless, also aware that I paid the whole debt. Pray, when did you hear from him?'

'I did not hear from him directly, my lord,' replied the knight, 'as we have, in fact, kept up no correspondence. I wrote to him, indeed, shortly after his departure, but he never answered my letter. But I saw, a few days ago, in an American paper, that the well-known Sir William Ryder was about to quit his dwelling at some strange-named place in a few weeks, for the purpose of visiting England, in order to induce the government to take measures for the protection and instruction of the savage Indians.'

A sneering smile curled the lip of the peer; but he made no observation upon the information he received. 'Did you not go down with him to Holyhead, on his way to embark for America, from some Irish port?' demanded Lord Dewry; 'I think I have heard so?'

'No, my lord, no,' replied Sir Roger; 'I met him at Holyhead by accident. I had just come over from Ireland, where I had been to settle a little affair with a man in Dublin. I lent Sir William one of my horses to go out to see some gipsies—what the devil business he had with them I could never tell—but the horse threw him and broke his ribs, and hurt himself into the bargain; but a gipsy fellow, the best farrier I ever saw, cured him in a week—the horse, I mean; but I believe they cured Sir William too; for I left him in their hands recovering fast—I myself being obliged to be at Newmarket before he could get out of his bed.'

'I thought I remembered something of the transaction,' said the peer. 'Sir William Ryder, with whom I was in some correspondence at that time, in regard to the very debt of which we were speaking, wrote to me that he had seen you there, and mentioned the accident your

horse had met with. But now tell me, Sir Roger, did you not receive from the gipsy farrier a bank-note, in change for money given him in payment?'

'No, my lord, not that I remember,' said the knight; 'faith, I have forgot what I gave him, and all about it.'

'Recollect yourself, Sir Roger,' said Lord Dewry; 'I think, if you remember right, you will find that he gave you in change a note, which you afterwards gave to me when we last settled our accounts together, about six months after I succeeded to this property.'

'Nay, nay, my lord,' said the knight, 'your lordship is not right there; it was you gave me the money; I gave you none. It was a round sum, you know, my lord.'

Lord Dewry bit his lip, and Sir Roger Millington could hear his foot stamp upon the carpet under the table with impatience at his contradiction. In truth, the noble lord did not at all desire to be driven to explanations, though, in fact, the dark and fearful scheme which his mind had formed for the purpose of delivering himself from all fear for ever was too deep and intricate to be understood by him whom he intended for his tool in accomplishing it, without a much fuller knowledge of the subject than the knight possessed.

'You do not understand me,' cried the peer, hastily; 'you will not understand me, Sir Roger! Mark me, now!' and then, after thinking for a moment, he proceeded in a stern, determined tone, and with a dark, contracted brow:—'You remember my succeeding to this property, Sir Roger; and you remember the circumstances of my brother's unfortunate death? The only person who saw the—the business was a gipsy; and at the time some circumstances made it appear so strongly probable that that gipsy had been himself the—the murderer, that Mr. Arden—old Mr. Arden who is still living—wished to commit him. I, however, foolishly would believe nothing of the story, as this very gipsy had always been a protegé of my brother's, and he was liberated. A number of small particulars, however, afterwards appeared to make me regret my obstinacy, and to convince me that the villain was really the assassin of my poor brother. I had him sought for in vain; and all the news I could learn of him was that he had sailed from Holyhead for Ireland. There I lost sight of him, till a few days ago, when I suddenly met him in the park; and I have since learned that he is lingering about in the neighbourhood of my other place at Dimden. I have laid a trap for him: we shall catch him this very night; and if it cost me half my fortune, I will bring him to justice.'

'Your lordship is right, very right,' exclaimed Sir Roger Millington; 'but I do not see——'

'Listen to me, Sir Roger, and you shall see,' replied the peer: 'I doubt not that I shall be able to convict him; but if my recollections are right, and can be supported by yours, his conviction is certain. My brother at his death had a large sum of money on his person. One of those notes marked with his name, in his own handwriting, has since come into my possession; and *I am sure that I received it from you, while I feel almost sure that you received it from the gipsy!*' He spoke the last words slowly and emphatically, and then added rapidly and sternly, 'Now, what I want you to do, Sir Roger, is to recollect yourself, and if you can remember the facts of your having received the note and given it to me—to be prepared to swear to those facts should it be necessary.'

Sir Roger Millington turned very pale. A light—a fearful light—had broken in upon him, and how far it served to guide his suspicions aright matters little. He was a man of few scruples, and vice and misery had both contributed to harden his heart: for though the uses of adversity may be sweet when acting on a virtuous disposition, yet I am afraid that in this good world of ours the back of that great felon Vice only gets callous under the lash of affliction. Sir Roger Millington, however, had, as we have said, but few scruples of any kind; yet this thing that Lord Dewry now proposed to him was a step beyond the point at which he had arrived in all the course of evil and of folly that he had hitherto pursued. He had fought and had slain men in another man's quarrel, but in doing so he had perilled his own life and the corporeal risk had seemed in some degree to balance the moral culpability; but now he was asked to say and do things which, without any danger to himself, would conduct another to an ignominious death—one against whom he had no enmity, whom he had never, perhaps, beheld, and of whose real guilt there was in his bosom many a terrible doubt. He felt that it was a fearful and an awful thing that he was called upon to do, and in despite of the absence of all moral principle—of twenty years' hardening in vice, and of a long training in degradation and dishonour—he turned pale, he hesitated; and, forgetting all restraint, rose from his seat and walked once or twice up and down the room in evident agitation.

Lord Dewry saw how far he had committed himself. He saw that, notwithstanding all his caution, his words, having been spoken to one whom habitual vice had rendered familiar with all the wiles of crime, might have put his suspicions on a track from which they could never be withdrawn, and that although Sir Roger had him not, indeed, in his power, as the gipsy had, yet that no sacrifice would be too great to force him on to acts which would make his co-operation irretrievable. He suffered him, then, to pace the room for a single minute; and then rising, he placed himself opposite to him, and laid his hand on that of the knight, 'Sir Roger,' he said, 'I am inclined to do much for you, but you know service must have service in return.'

'But tell me, my lord,' exclaimed the other, with some vehemence, 'do you really believe that the note you speak of was ever in the possession of the gipsy?'

'I not only believe it, but I am sure of it,' replied the peer. 'Hear me, Sir Roger; I pledge you my honour, my soul, my word, this note which you now see, and which is marked with my brother's own hand, must have been in possession of the gipsy after my brother's death; and if it did not come to me from you, it must at all events have come through some one who received it of the gipsy.' Nor in this assertion did he speak falsely; for the note was one of those which he had sent to the gipsy by Sir William Ryder, and which had accidentally returned to his own possession.

It is wonderful how easily men can sometimes satisfy their conscience. Sir Roger did not pause to ask any very minute explanation; the vehemence with which his noble entertainer spoke convinced him that in some sense he spoke sincerely; and he would have been very sorry, by any indiscreet question, to have discovered that there was anything like a double meaning in the words. 'Well,' he said, 'I think I do remember something of the transaction, my lord; and I doubt not that a few moments' thought will bring it all back clearly to my memory.'

The peer pressed his hand. 'Well then, Sir Roger,' he said, 'so much for my affairs when they are all settled: hear what I wish to do for you. I propose to give you apartments in my house at Dimden, where you shall undertake to superintend all my improvements and works of taste, for which you will favour me by receiving a deed of annuity for one thousand per annum *during my life*. I am sorry that I cannot make it permanent, but I have not the power; all I can do can only last as long as my life lasts.'

Bright, bright grew the eyes of Sir Roger Millington; and, bowing low before the peer, he uttered a few words of thanks, and cast himself back into his chair to enjoy the glad transition from a state of beggary and despair to the prospect of affluence and luxury such as he had never hoped to see again. All scruples were swallowed up in satisfaction; not even a shadow of them remained; and he was now only anxious to prove his zeal in those services which were to merit so noble a reward.

The peer had seated himself, also, with the note of which he spoke laid on the table before him; and it was not difficult for him to see that the feelings of the serviceable Sir Roger Millington were undergoing the exact sort of transition which he desired. He accordingly entered into farther explanations; and Sir Roger, in his eagerness to merit the favour of so generous a patron, proposed of his own free will to write his name upon the note in such a manner as to give every apparent veracity to the recollections to which he was to swear.

'You will find the butler's pen and ink in the buffet,' said the peer, in reply; 'dip your pen first in the claret, Sir Roger, to make the ink look faint and old. Only put your name; no date—no date; never be too precise. Thank you, thank you; now he cannot escape me.'

'But, my lord,' said Sir Roger, 'as I am to swear to the person of the gipsy from whom I received the note, will it not be better that I should see him first before he is taken up, so that I may identify him at once without any appearance of connivance?'

'That is, I am afraid, impossible,' replied the peer; 'for we have found out that he and his fellows have a design upon the deer in Dimden Park this very night, and a large party of keepers have been assembled to arrest them, so that between twelve and one they will all be prisoners. Otherwise it might have been better as you say.'

'But there is time before that,' said Sir Roger, looking at his watch, which — as the dinner hours of that day were very, very different from those of the present time—only pointed at seven even after this long conversation with the peer, —'there is time before that, my lord: how far is it to Dimden?'

'Fourteen miles at least,' replied the peer.

'Lend me a strong horse, and I will be over by half-past eight,' answered Sir Roger. 'If I cannot get a sight of him by any other means, I will join the keepers privately, and as soon as ever the business is over come back here; so that I may point out the fellow at once, if there should be twenty of them. What is his name, my lord: do you know?'

'Pharold, he is called,' answered the peer, thoughtfully. 'Your plan is good, but I am afraid it is too late. Let us take care that by trying to do too much we do not spoil all.'

'Oh, no fear, my lord,' replied Sir Roger, who was not without hopes of getting a private conversation with the gipsy before his arrest, for Sir Roger was not a little desirous of having the peer more fully in his power, as some security for the fulfilment of his promises. 'No fear, no fear, my lord; and remember it would never do if I were to point out the wrong man by any chance.'

This argument was conclusive with Lord Dewry. The bell was rung, a swift horse was ordered to be saddled immediately, Sir Roger equipped himself for riding, received minute directions as to the way to Dimden, and the peer and his guest were standing before the fireplace waiting for the horse, each occupied with his own thoughts, and each rejoicing at the event of a meeting which had seemed at first so inauspicious,—Sir Roger Millington indulging in dreams of future luxury and ease, and the Baron triumphing in the hope that the means he had employed, the dark and dreadful scheme which he was prepared to execute, would bid defiance to accusation, and sweep from his path for ever the man that he most feared on earth—when the sound of more horses' feet than one was heard without, the bell was rung violently, and the servant entering, announced that a gentleman on horseback was at the door, urging important business with his lordship.

'Did he give his name?' demanded Lord Dewry.

'Yes, my lord,' replied the man; 'he bade me say that it was Colonel Manners!'

'Ho, ho!' said the peer, his lip curling with a haughty smile; 'take him into the saloon! This is a business of no importance, Sir Roger; do not let it detain you. Fare you well, my good friend, and may success attend you.'

'I give your lordship back your wish,' replied Sir Roger, 'and will wait on you to-morrow at breakfast with all my tidings.'

Thus saying they parted, Sir Roger proceeding to hasten the arrival of the horse, and the peer walking with a haughty step towards the saloon, where he was waited by Colonel Manners.

CHAPTER XVI.

BLOOD-STAINS ON THE GRASS.

We must now turn to follow the course of Colonel Manners, from the time we last left him at Morley House to the moment of his visit to Lord Dewry, comprising in all a space of about eight hours. While waiting for his horse he had, as we have already seen, examined quickly, but not the less accurately, into the story of the peasant who had heard shots fired in the neighbouring wood during the night before; and he had thus satisfied himself that there was very little probability of there being any connection whatever between those shots and the absence of his friend, except such as the marvel-loving mood of the old butler and the natural fears of De Vaux's relations had supplied from the stores of imagination. The shots had been fired, it seemed, in a direction different from that in which there were many reasons for believing that De Vaux had gone; and the man himself acknowledged, not only that he had originally supposed the sounds to be occasioned by poachers, but that he had heard the report of one gun on the preceding night.

Convinced, from what he himself suspected, as well as from what Marian had said, that De Vaux had gone to visit the gipsies on the hill, Colonel Manners at once determined to turn his horse's head thither, before he made any examination in the wood where the shots had been heard; and in this resolution he was strongly confirmed by a short conversation with the head gardener, whom he met as he was just passing the gates.

As soon as Manners saw him he checked his horse and demanded, 'Pray, in coming through the garden this morning, did you see any marks of steps in the direction of the small door leading towards Morley Down?'

'No, sir,' replied the man; 'but I found the key in the outside of the door this morning, so that anybody might have got into the garden that liked; but, however, I cannot see that any of the fruit is gone. Did you hear of any one having got in last night, sir?'

'No, no,' answered Manners: 'I did not mean to imply that,' and spurring on his horse, he rode forward, more than ever determined to address his first inquiries to the gipsies. Now Colonel Manners was not a man to pause and wonder what could be the connection between the Honourable Edward de Vaux and the king of shreds and patches from whom he had received the letter, till the time was past for rendering effectual service. Nevertheless, as he rode on, he did wonder much at that connection, revolving in his mind everything probable and improbable which could account for these circumstances, but keeping his horse's chest all the time steadily against the hill, and his spurs to its flanks, to prevent its resisting a method of progression to which he never subjected it except on occasions of necessity. The beast panted, but still Manners, feeling that perhaps too much time had been lost already, kept it up to the same pace, saying internally, 'You would have gone unflinching at the heels of the hounds, my good grey, and the matter is more important now.'

The early rays of the sun had licked up the hoar-frost of a clear autumnal morning, but had left the roads in consequence, and especially the road up which Manners's course lay, heavy and difficult. The sunshine, too, of the autumn—as we often see with the sunshine of life—had been too early bright to continue unclouded to the close of the day; and now even as he rode on, a thin brownish film of dull vapour began to creep up from the verge of the horizon, promising rain ere long. Manners spurred on all the faster, not that as far as his own person was concerned he cared whether it rained or not, but he had served long enough with nations who follow their enemies by the lightest traces in the dew or in the sand to know that a heavy rain was often destruction itself to the hopes of a pursuing party.

At length he reached the level at the top of the ascent; and pointing with his hand to the tumulus he said, turning to those who followed him, 'You, William, ride up as far as you can upon the mound, and keep a keen eye upon the whole plain. If you see any one skulking about or watching, give instant notice; and gallop up if you hear me call. You come with me,' he added to his own man; and taking the shortest cut towards the sandpit, he spurred on towards the spot where he had last seen the gipsies. The bushes, however, were now directly between him and the bank that had sheltered their encampment, so that he could see nothing till he was nearly upon the pit.

Then, however, his disappointment was not small to find the usual relics of a gipsy resting-place, but nothing else. A few rags, a leaf of an old black-letter book, feathers of many birds, and fur of more than one sort of beast, several charred spots, and a large stick or two, were to be seen upon the ground; but nothing else met the eye in any direction, and Manners paused for a moment to lay out what was to be done next.

'Go back for a hundred yards,' he said, at length, turning to his servant; 'and then make a slow circle at that distance, quite round this

pit, seeing whether you can find fresh footmarks in any direction.'

The servant obeyed, and in a few minutes exclaimed, 'Here are a great many, sir, along this road, which seems to go down the other side of the hill. Horses' feet, too, and cart-wheels quite fresh!'

'Go on quite round,' rejoined his master. 'What do you find more?'

'Here are a good many scattered footmarks in this direction, sir,' replied the man, when he had arrived at a spot situated exactly between Manners and the little tumulus; 'but they do not tend in any particular way that I can see.'

Manners rode up, but the foot-prints were turned in many directions, and were of various sizes, some seemingly fresh, and some half effaced by others. Nothing, therefore, could be discovered from the traces on that particular spot; but as Colonel Manners had every reason for believing that his friend must have approached the gipsy encampment from that side, he took the pains of dismounting and tracing the different steps some way upon each of the several paths in which they led. It was in vain, however; the whole were so puzzled and intermixed that he could make nothing of them, and had his foot in the stirrup to mount again, when De Vaux's servant came down from the mound at full gallop, exclaiming, 'There is certainly some one watching there, sir, at the edge of that wood. I have seen them come out and in three times. There! there! do you see, sir? He is coming more forward now.'

Could Manners have bent down with his attendants, so as to escape the attention of the person who approached, he would certainly have done so; but though they might have hidden themselves amongst the neighbouring slopes, their horses were not so easily concealed, and the sand-pit was now too far off to afford them a screen. A moment's thought showed him that it would be best to stand quite still, as the man, whoever he was, was still advancing. The next moment, however, the stranger stopped—went on again a few steps farther—stopped again, and then turning precipitately, made his way back towards the wood.

Manners was in the saddle in a moment; and could speed have accomplished what he desired, the person who so evidently sought to avoid observation would not have escaped, but the distance he had advanced from the wood had not been more than a hundred yards; and long ere Manners's horse could reach the skirt of the forest ground, all vestige of him he pursued was lost, in an intricate labyrinth of trees and bushes, which set farther search at defiance. The two men came up shortly after, while Manners was pausing disappointed by the edge of the wood; and De Vaux's servant, touching his hat, called the Colonel's attention to some footmarks, which they had passed as they followed him. Manners instantly turned back, and in a dip of the ground, where some mud had been left by a half dried-up pool, he discovered the distinct traces of two different sets of footsteps. Both were small, and neither seemed to have been left by the tread of a peasant; but one was evidently the mark of a boot cut by some neat and fashionable maker, and De Vaux's servant declared that he could swear to that print having been made by his master's foot.

Nothing remained, then, but to follow these footsteps as far as possible; but the difficulty of doing so was not small, for there were but few spots of a nature similar to that in which the traces had been found, and the ground around was in general covered by a short parched grass, or long tufts of rushes. At length however, at the distance of more than fifty yards farther on, in the exact direction in which the other steps pointed, Manners discovered the mark of a heel, and this again led them to more steps. Several times the traces seemed lost entirely, and several times Colonel Manners was obliged to return to the last he had seen, and set off anew; but still the positive assertions of his friend's servant that the footsteps were those of De Vaux caused Manners to persist, till at length he succeeded in tracing the prints to the edge of the steep bank, to which, as we have seen, the gipsy had really led his unfortunate visitor.

Manners now paused with some very painful apprehensions gathering thick upon him. Thither it is true De Vaux must have come willingly with some other person, for there was not the slightest appearance either of haste or resistance in any of the footmarks they had seen; but it was in that very wood, near which they now were, that the report of firearms had been heard the night before; and, as far as Manners had been able to discover, it had been in the precise direction to which the steps had now guided them. What, too, he asked himself, could be De Vaux's inducement to approach so lonely a place as this—by a path which led to no other object—in the dead of the night, and with a person to whom it appeared he must have been a stranger? What, too, could be that person's object in leading him thither at such a time?

No answer could he give to either of these questions which was at all likely to calm the apprehensions that he now began seriously to entertain concerning his friend's fate; and he gazed round the spot to which the footsteps had conducted him with more anxiety concerning the next object that was to meet his view, than ever he had felt on the field of battle.

At length, however, his eye rested on the little rugged path by which his friend and the gipsy had descended to the scene of their conference; and Manners at once followed it. Here, again, the two sets of footprints were distinctly visible, going down towards the abandoned quarry and the felled oak. There were marks also to be seen as of some one coming up; but they had evidently been imprinted by the tread of one person, and that not of Edward de Vaux. A few drops of blood next met Manners's eye, as with an attentive gaze he examined the ground

while he descended. Then came more and more, dotting the sand with red, till they at length led on to a spot where the same footsteps were thick and many, as if the persons, whose course they marked, had stood there for some time. There, too, appeared, however, an evidence of more import; for close to the spot where De Vaux and the gipsy had been standing, the sand had drunk up a large quantity of gore, while the patches of short green grass that had rooted themselves here and there upon the broken ground around were dabbled with red in various directions.

Manners gazed with horror and with grief on signs so unequivocal of the fate of his unhappy friend; and if he sorrowed bitterly for De Vaux, his heart was hardly less afflicted when he thought of her who was so soon to have become his bride,—of her whose father and whose lover had shared the same dark and melancholy fate. His heart bled for her, and although, under any circumstances, he would have felt the same sympathy for De Vaux's family, and the same grief for the loss of his friend, the pain he personally felt was aggravated by the belief that he had, in some degree, been made an instrument for the purpose of decoying him into the trap which had evidently been laid for him. That feeling, however, and the indignation which that feeling awakened, made him the more strongly determine never to abandon the search till he had discovered the murderer, and brought him to justice. He resolved to devote time, and fortune, and life itself, if it should be necessary, to the pursuit—to trace the offender out with the pertinacity of a bloodhound, and to run him down as he would a wolf.

Although, to a man of Manners's character and peculiar frame of mind, the very task of the avenger was a bitter and a dreadful one, yet there was another duty still more grievous which lay before him for execution; that of communicating to the family of his unhappy friend the painful facts he had discovered; and the thought of the tears of Marian, and the sterner grief of Mrs. Falkland, and the deep, deep sorrow of her daughter, all thrilled upon him as he contemplated the course he had to follow. But to such thoughts he gave but a few moments. No time was to be lost in long deliberation if action were to be effectual; and as Manners was not more a man of real deep and noble feeling than he was a man of active energy, he turned instantly to the measures for detecting the murderer. His first step was to take the exact measurement of both the footprints, and the next to note down precisely, in his memorandum book, everything that had occurred in the search.

The man who had been seen watching his party from the wood, he felt sure was implicated in the transaction, if he were not the principal; and amongst the gipsies were to be found, beyond all doubt, the accomplices of the murderer, if not the participators in the deed itself. After a brief conversation, then, with the servants concerning the discoveries they had already made, he proceeded to inquire what was the next village or town to the seat of Lord Dewry; and being informed by his late friend's servant, who was well acquainted with the county that it was called Barholm, he went on to give farther directions.

'You, William,' he said, 'ride back to the sand-pit, which you saw me examining just now on the top of the common; you will there find the tracks of wheels and feet, going down the opposite road to that by which we came, indicating the direction the gipsies have taken. Follow them as fast as you can, making continual inquiries concerning them. Trace them out, step by step, till you have found them. Then hire any of the peasantry to keep watch upon them night and day, paying whatever sum may be necessary in advance, and giving strict orders to follow them wherever they go. There is a note to pay the people. Do not spare either speed or money; and when you have taken these precautions, ride over to join me at Barholm, where I will be to-night. Quick! mount and away!'

The man obeyed, and Manners then turned to his own servant. 'You, John,' he said, 'lead your horse down the bank to the road—then on to the village there with all speed. Gather together as many stout men as ever you can, and mount them at any price. Establish corresponding patrols all round this wood, as we did at the wood beyond Montreal last year, and remember that the great thing is haste. There is money, and if you need more, refer the people to me at Morley House. When you have done that, and left the care of the patrol in the hands of the most intelligent fellow you can find, come back to me at the house.'

'Shall I tell the folks what is the matter, sir?' demanded the servant.

Manners mused for some moments. 'Yes,' he said, at length, 'yes; circumstances fully justify it; and the people, who must love Mrs. Falkland and her family, will work in the matter with the greater interest. Lose no time, John, lest the fellow get out of the wood before you can surround it. He will probably lie there for half an hour or so, till he thinks we are gone, and then will make an effort to escape. It will take at least four or five and twenty men to watch it properly, giving each of them half a mile; but I should think that in the village you can get together as many,—at all events, do your best.'

The man bowed, and led his beast down the bank, while Manners, springing into the saddle, turned his horse's head back towards Morley House.

With grief and with reluctance he did so, and although he felt the necessity of promptitude in his own proceedings, and that he had no right to keep those so deeply interested in suspense, yet repugnance to his painful task certainly rendered his horse's pace slower in re-

turning than it had been when he set out upon his search.

'How is Miss De Vaux now?' he asked of the servant who presented himself to take his horse, and it was some relief to hear in reply that she had not come down. He then ascended the stairs towards the drawing-room, but in the ante-room he was met by Isadore, who had already become aware of his return. All the light gay spirit was gone from her eyes, and her countenance now expressed nothing but intense anxiety.

'You look grave, Colonel Manners,' she exclaimed, as soon as she saw him. 'You look sad; for Heaven's sake tell me what have you discovered?'

'Nothing at all satisfactory,' replied Manners, anxious to break the matter to her as gently as possible; 'the whole business is certainly very strange; but I still hope and trust that——'

'Hope and trust!' exclaimed Isadore, clasping her hands. 'Oh, Colonel Manners, you know more than you say! Poor, poor Marian! But tell me, I beseech you, tell me all. Indeed, this suspense is worse than the truth.'

'I have very little to tell, my dear Miss Falkland,' he replied; 'but I must acknowledge that what I have to tell is not at all calculated to remove our apprehensions.'

'But the gipsies, Colonel Manners!' exclaimed Isadore; 'have you seen the gipsies?'

'No, I have not,' he answered; 'they had left the common before I arrived; but I found traces of the way they had taken, and have sent your cousin's own servant to pursue them.'

'Sent my cousin's servant without attempting to follow them yourself!' cried Isadore; but then, instantly lighting upon the right conclusion, she added, 'But no—no—no, Colonel Manners, I know you better! You would never have sent my cousin's servant upon such an inquiry unless you had discovered something to render your stay here more necessary. But here comes mamma from poor Marian's room. Now, for Heaven's sake, tell us all, Colonel Manners.'

'I hope Miss de Vaux is more composed,' said Manners, turning to Mrs. Falkland as she entered.

'She is asleep from the effect of strong opiates, my dear sir,' replied Mrs. Falkland, gravely; 'and, if I may judge from your countenance, it is happy for her that she is so. Now, Colonel Manners, tell me candidly what you have discovered—I require no preparation.'

'The facts are simply these, then,' replied Manners, 'and I will not attempt to conceal from you that I am deeply uneasy on account of De Vaux. When I reached the gipsy encampment all was vacant, and nothing to be found but the place where it had been, together with fresh tracks of wheels and feet, marking the direction which the great body of the gipsies had taken. However, in another part of the common we discovered footmarks, which De Vaux's servant positively asserts to be those of his master; and, of course, my first care was to follow those as far as possible. They led us, I am sorry to say, in the direction where shots had been heard in the wood.'

'Good God!' cried Isadore, the tears bursting from her eyes; 'poor Edward! and still more unhappy Marian!'

'Nay, do not weep so bitterly, Miss Falkland,' said Manners, 'or I fear I shall not be able to finish my account. Remember, however, that we have discovered as yet nothing at all certain, and that such appearances as we have discovered are often—very often—fallacious.'

'You must let her weep, Colonel Manners,' said Mrs. Falkland; 'men never understand how great a relief tears are to a woman, and often I regret that some severe sorrows have taken from me the power of weeping as once I could. Pray go on, too; let us hear the worst. Where did the steps lead to?'

'To a high bank just above a turn in the road,' replied Colonel Manners, 'a little more than a mile on the other side of the village.'

'Indeed!' cried Mrs. Falkland, now extremely agitated; 'the very spot where my poor brother was murdered.'

'Not exactly,' answered Manners, 'for that spot was pointed out to me by De Vaux as we came hither, and the place to which I now refer, though near it, is not precisely the same. At that bank, however, all traces of my poor friend's footsteps were lost, and I could only find those of another person going away from it.'

Isadore continued to weep in silence, but Mrs. Falkland, seeing that Manners paused somewhat abruptly, fixed her eye upon him with a look of keen inquiry. Manners glanced towards Miss Falkland, slightly raising his eyebrows and shaking his head, and Mrs. Falkland, understanding his meaning, took Isadore's hand, saying, 'Go, my love, and sit by your poor cousin. Colonel Manners may have business with me which we can better discuss alone.'

Isadore obeyed at once, and Mrs. Falkland then turned to Manners with firm composure, saying, 'Now, Colonel Manners, tell me all; what more did you find?'

'I am sorry to say, madam,' he answered, 'that I found a great deal of blood spilt upon the sand.'

Mrs. Falkland covered her eyes with her hands, and remained silent for several minutes. At length she looked up, and Colonel Manners proceeded: 'I have now, madam, related all that I have done, except some measures already taken for the apprehension of the persons implicated. Such appearances as those I have met with, I still say, are often fallacious; but, nevertheless, it is absolutely necessary to take the same steps as if they were perfectly certain. If you will give me the name of the nearest

magistrate, I will write to him instantly to obtain his sanction for what I have already done, and his assistance in what we may yet have to do.'

'The nearest magistrate is old Mr. Arden,' replied Mrs. Falkland, 'an active and intelligent man, though somewhat severe. He is the same,' she added, while some tears came into her eyes,—'he is the same who investigated with so much energy the circumstances attending the death of my poor brother.'

'To him, then, I will write at once, madam,' replied Manners. 'When I have done so, I have another task to perform which will lead me to some distance; but I will be back here to-morrow; for though I would not willingly intrude upon your family in such a moment of grief, yet I hold myself bound——'

'Oh, do not call it intruding, Colonel Manners,' cried Mrs. Falkland; 'if you will have the great kindness to manage the whole of this sad business for me, to act as my representative in it, and to add my love for my poor nephew to your own friendship for him, as motives for ascertaining his fate and pursuing his murderers, you will confer the greatest of favours on me and mine. Oh, no, Colonel Manners, you must not think of leaving us at such a moment as this, when we all want the assistance, advice, and support of one so well calculated to strengthen and to aid us. But do you know there is another task I am going to put upon you, and circumstances may render it very painful to you—De Vaux's father—I could wish these tidings broken to him. His whole soul was wrapped up in his son; and I am sure Colonel Manners is too generous not to forget, in moments of affliction, an offence that——'

'I have already arranged, my dear madam,' replied Colonel Manners, 'to go over to Lord Dewry as soon as I have written to Mr. Arden. De Vaux's servant is to meet me at the village of Barholm; and believe me that the little dispute which occurred between the father of my friend and myself rests too lightly on my mind to be thought of for a moment, when I can, in any degree, blunt the first sharp edge of the sad tidings he must soon hear.'

'I see one cannot calculate too liberally on your good feeling,' said Mrs. Falkland; 'nor can I express what a relief it is to me to have you here, Colonel Manners, at such a trying moment. I cannot, indeed, in my present state of mind, attend to your comfort as I could wish; but let me beg you, at least, to take some refreshment ere you set out for my brother's.'

'None, I thank you, my dear madam,' he replied; 'I do not require it. But now do not let me detain you. I know that you, too, have the painful task of breaking the confirmation of our fears to her who will feel the pang more acutely than any.'

'Indeed, I hardly know how to do it,' replied Mrs. Falkland. 'To a casual observer, Marian may appear cold and indifferent by nature; but quite the reverse is known to be the case by those who have better opportunities of judging. Her heart is all warmth, and tenderness, and affection; and it is, perhaps, a consciousness of the very excess of such feelings that makes her put a stricter guard upon the expression of them. I fear that these tidings, if told entirely, will go far to kill her.'

'Then by no means tell them, my dear madam,' replied Manners; 'I am no advocate for concealments or pious frauds of any kind; and where the strength of the individual is able to bear them up, we should always speak the truth; but of course we must regulate our conduct by our knowledge of the person; and both from what I have seen to-day, and what you yourself say, I would strongly advise you—if you will excuse my doing so—to tell Miss de Vaux, merely, that I have not succeeded in my first search for my poor friend, and that I am still following the same object in a different direction.'

'I believe I must do even as you say,' replied Mrs. Falkland, 'and suffer Marian's mind to come to the sad conclusion, to which we have already come, by degrees. Though the suspense may be harrowing, yet it will not have so bad an effect on her as the sudden confirmation of her worst fears. Allow me, too, to hint, Colonel Manners, that you will find my brother less capable of bearing such tidings than you may imagine, from what you have seen of his demeanour. His love for his son was as ardent as his other passions.'

'Do not be afraid, my dear madam,' replied Manners, taking her hand; 'I will do nothing roughly, believe me.'

'I do, indeed,' answered Mrs. Falkland, 'I do, indeed, believe that it is not in the nature of Colonel Manners to act unkindly to any one. At what time shall I order the carriage?'

'Oh, not at all — not at all,' he answered; 'I will ride; it is always my custom; and as soon as I have written this letter, and my servant has returned, I will set out. Let me detain you no longer, and God grant that our fears may have magnified the proofs in their own support.'

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PLOT THICKENS.

NOTHING shows us, perhaps, the utter blindness in which we are held by fate more completely, than the constant fallacy of our calculations in regard to even the smallest events over which we have not a personal and unlimited control.

As Lord Dewry walked towards the room to which he had directed the servant to conduct Colonel Manners, he did not fail to calculate the cause of his coming. 'He is either here,' thought the peer, 'to apologise for his conduct,

in which case I shall treat him with contempt, or he has come to proffer that personal satisfaction which he before refused.'

As he thus thought, he opened the door of the saloon in the midst of which Colonel Manners was standing, booted and spurred, and dusty from the road; but with that air of ease, composure, and calmness, which spoke his character.

'My lord,' he said, as soon as the peer entered, 'I am obliged very unwillingly to intrude upon you; and of course feel more uncomfortable in interrupting you at this unseasonable hour; but the business on which I come admits of no delay.'

'I am not aware, sir,' replied the peer, frowning sternly, 'what business can remain between us, after our last meeting, when you thought fit——'

'My lord,' interrupted Colonel Manners, anxious to put a stop to a revival of past grievances, which, at the present moment, could only aggravate the pain he had to inflict—'my lord, my present business is totally unconnected with the past; and extremely sorry I am that anything ever occurred between your lordship and myself to render my present visit disagreeable to you in itself.'

'Sir, your expression of sorrow,' replied the peer, 'as is usual in such cases, comes too late; but to your business, sir. Do not let me interrupt that. What is your business with me? for the sooner we settle it the better shall I be pleased.'

There was a pertinacity in Lord Dewry's rudeness that offended Manners, but he gave no way to his anger. There was a stronger feeling in his bosom, and pity for the childless old man not barely mastered every other sensation, but mastered all so completely, that he went on with as nice a calculation of the best and kindest means of breaking his loss to the peer, as if not a word had been said but those of welcome and civility. 'My lord,' he replied, 'I come to you as one of the principal magistrates of this county, in your quality of lord lieutenant——'

'I wish, sir,' interrupted the peer, 'that you had sought some other magistrate to whom your presence would have been more welcome.'

'I might have done so, my lord,' replied Manners, 'had the business on which I had to seek a magistrate not been one so immediately affecting your lordship, that although, in the first instance, I wrote to the nearest justice of the peace that I could hear of, Mr. Arden, I thought it but right to ride over myself to request your co-operation in the measures we are taking.'

Manners observed a change of expression, and a slight degree of paleness pass over the countenance of his hearer; and, although he certainly did not attribute it to that consciousness of crime and consequent feeling of insecurity, in which it really originated, he saw that the first step was gained; and that the peer was, in some degree, prepared to hear evil tidings. Lord Dewry, however, replied, in a manner which had nearly forced the communication at once. 'May I ask, sir,' he said in a tone grave but less bitter than that which he had formerly employed—'may I ask, sir, why, when business of importance concerning myself occurred, my son did not take upon himself the task of communicating with his father upon the subject, but rather left it to a person whose visit was certainly unsolicited?'

'Because, my lord, your son was not capable of doing so,' replied Colonel Manners, 'from the fact of his being absent from Morley House.'

'Not at Morley House!' cried the peer. 'Pray where is he then, sir?'

'I really cannot inform your lordship,' replied Manners, 'for I do not know.'

'Good God! this is very extraordinary,' cried Lord Dewry, taking alarm more from the tone of Manners's voice, and the expression of his countenance, than from anything he had said. 'For Heaven's sake, explain yourself, sir. Where is my son? What is your business? Sit down, sir, I beg! What is it you seek?'

By the agitated manner in which the Baron spoke, Manners saw that he must proceed cautiously.

'May I ask you, my lord, if you have ever heard of a person named Pharold, a gipsy?' he demanded, intending by this question to lead his hearer's mind away, for a moment, from the real subject of apprehension; but, without at all wishing it, by that very inquiry he redoubled the agitation of the peer.

For an instant the thoughts of Lord Dewry were all in confusion and uncertainty—doubtful of the end to which Manners's interrogatory tended, and fearful that a man to whom he had given such just cause for anger had become acquainted with some of the dreadful secrets which oppressed his own bosom. His first impulse was to lift his hand to his head, and to gaze with some degree of wildness upon the countenance of his questioner; but almost instantly recalling his firmness, and recollecting the measures he had taken, and the schemes he had laid out, he recovered also his composure, and replied with a forced smile: 'You have alarmed me about my son, Colonel Manners; but you ask me if I know a gipsy of the name of Pharold. I do; my family have, I am afraid, too good reason to know him.'

'Then have you any cause to suppose that he bears an ill-will towards your family?' demanded Manners again.

'I have, sir!' replied Lord Dewry; 'I have the strongest reasons to believe that he bears us ill will—that he has already injured us, and seeks but the opportunity to do more and more for our destruction.'

'Does his ill will particularly point against your son, my lord?' asked Manners, deeply interested by an answer which to him was both mysterious and painful.

'No, no!' exclaimed the peer, starting up

from the chair into which he had cast himself when he had invited Manners to be seated, 'no, no, certainly not! What is the meaning of this? You have some darker meaning, sir? What of Edward? Tell me, I beseech you tell me, where is my son?'

'My lord, I am grieved to repeat that I cannot tell you where he is,' replied Manners; 'and it is for the purpose of concerting means for discovering him that I now wait upon your lordship. He went out, it appears, to see this gipsy Pharold, and has never returned.'

Manners acted for the best; and having not the slightest idea of all that was passing in the bosom of De Vaux's father, he thought that by concealing for a few moments the proof he had obtained of his friend having been murdered, he would allow the mind of the unhappy parent to come by degrees, and less painfully, to a knowledge of the truth; but the result was by no means such as he anticipated; for to Lord Dewry the bare idea of his son having any communication whatever with the eye-witness of that dreadful deed, which he had committed in other years, was agonising in itself; and, without remembering that any one was present to remark the agitation to which he yielded, he clasped his hands together, and strode up and down the saloon, muttering, 'Villain! scoundrel! it is all over!' Then again recollecting that he was observed, he found it necessary to curb his emotions, and to make anxiety for his son the apparent cause for that agitation which he had already displayed. 'Colonel Manners,' he said, 'you alarm me much. For Heaven's sake tell me the particulars. Something more than a temporary and ordinary absence must have occurred to excite apprehensions in an officer so much accustomed to danger as yourself. Nor is my sister a woman to yield to idle fears. Tell me, then, what has happened to my son, and why you are led to suppose that there has been any communication between him and a person, in regard to whom I have more than suspicions of very terrible deeds, who is, I believe, a villain of the blackest character, and who would scruple at nothing to injure a race who were his first benefactors.'

'The facts are these, my lord,' replied Manners; 'but I trust we shall find that your son's absence is owing, notwithstanding its strangeness, to some accidental circumstance of no importance. It appears that last night De Vaux did not go to bed, that he left Morley House during the night, and that he has never returned during the day. He also, I find, mentioned yesterday to his cousin, Miss de Vaux, his intention of visiting a gipsy named Pharold, who had sent him a letter that morning; but his purpose, as he then stated it, was to go to Morley Down, where the gipsies were to-day, and not during the night; and his prolonged absence has, of course, greatly alarmed Mrs. Falkland and her family.'

'But has no search been instituted? Have no traces been found?' cried Lord Dewry, his fears taking a new direction. 'No time should be lost.'

'No time has been lost as yet, my lord,' replied Manners. 'I myself have been to the place where the gipsies were last seen; but they are there no more, and, to all appearance, must have either decamped in the night or early this morning. But it appears certain, from the evidence of Mr. de Vaux's servant, who was with me, that some footprints, which we traced on the ground, in different parts of the common, were from my poor friend's boot; and in the same track are those of another person, who was apparently with him during the night.'

'But whither did they lead?' exclaimed the peer, whose agitation was becoming dreadful; 'speak out, sir, for God's sake! You call him your poor friend—you have discovered more. Whither did the footsteps lead? I can bear all!'

'They led, my lord,' replied Manners, 'to a high bank, overhanging a part of the road, about a mile or more to the west of Morley House, near a point of wooded land which causes the river to take a singular bend in its course.'

Lord Dewry shook in every limb, but, by a strong effort, he uttered, 'Go on, sir, go on; let me hear the worst.'

'Thank God, my lord, I have little more to inflict upon your lordship,' replied Manners. 'At that bank the steps ended, but——'

He paused, and the peer eagerly demanded, 'But what—what found you more?'

'It must be told,' thought Manners. 'We found, my lord,' he added aloud, 'a good deal of blood spilt upon the sand.'

The peer groaned bitterly. 'My poor boy! my poor boy!' he cried, but for some minutes he said no more.

While Manners had been in the act of telling his tale, the conflict which had taken place in the bosom of Lord Dewry can better be conceived than described. Every moment produced a change of sensation; every word a new and different apprehension. Now he fancied his son made acquainted with his guilt; now feared that the very means he had taken to conceal it might have made the gipsy wreak his vengeance on his unoffending child.

Pharold might have obtained information of the trap laid for him by the gamekeeper, and to avenge himself might have revealed his whole history to Edward de Vaux, at another he believed that the destruction of his son might have been the means which the gipsies had determined upon, in order to punish himself for his designs against them.

As Colonel Manners concluded his account, however, the latter opinion predominated over all others; the peer's own heart acknowledged that the means they had taken was that which was the most fearfully effectual; and he beheld no other image than the heir of his name, the child of his love, murdered in cold blood, within sight of the very spot where his own hand

had slain his brother. All his first emotions were consecrated to deep grief. He had loved his son, he had admired him; and affection and pride had united to give him the only green place in a heart that angry passions had left arid and desolate; and now he was alone in all the world.

He remained silent for several minutes, but his features worked, and his limbs even writhed, wrought unconsciously by the intensity of the emotions within. Colonel Manners saw the strong and painful degree of his agitation, but he had no key to the secret sources of feeling which, opened wide by the news of his son's loss, were gushing forth in streams of bitterness upon his heart. He attributed, then, all that he saw to deep grief; and although his application to the peer in his magisterial capacity had been put to bring about the disclosures he had to make as gently as possible, yet he still thought it best to continue the same course with which he had begun, in order to engage the unhappy nobleman in those personal and active exertions which might in some degree divert his mind from the sole and painful contemplation of his recent loss.

'My lord,' he said, feelingly, 'believe me, no one feels more deeply and sympathises more sincerely with your lordship than myself; but allow me to recall to your mind that great and instant exertions are necessary to insure the arrest of the murderer, the pursuit of whom I have determined never to quit till I have seen him brought to justice.'

Lord Dewry, with his own burning hand, clasped warmly that of Colonel Manners, the object of his former hatred. The fact is, however, that circumstances had established between them two strong ties since the death of Edward de Vaux. The one was wholly composed of good feelings, and sprang from their mutual affection for the deceased,—affection which had, of course, risen in value in each other's eyes since death had hallowed it; and the other,—composed of feelings which, though noble and virtuous on the one part, were terribly mixed with evil on the other,—was the desire of bringing the murderer to justice. Lord Dewry then grasped Colonel Manners's hand and said, 'I have much to thank you for, sir, and I am afraid that I have somewhat to apologise for in the past; but——'

'Do not mention it, I beg, my lord,' replied Manners; 'it is forgotten entirely. Only let us bend our energies with a common effort to pursue this sad affair to an end, to discover, as far as Heaven shall enable us, what has really occurred; and, above all, to insure the immediate apprehension of this gipsy Pharold, whom every circumstance, hitherto apparent, points at as the murderer.'

A gleam of triumph broke over the thin, sallow countenance of the peer. 'If I am not very much mistaken, Colonel Manners,' he said, 'this very Pharold will be in our hands to-night. He and his gang are not famous alone for one sort of crime. My park-keepers at Dimden informed me a few days ago that they had discovered a plan which these gipsies had laid for robbing my park of the deer, and I immediately took measures to insure the arrest of the whole of them in the very fact. Nor was my purpose alone to save my game, Colonel Manners, nor to punish deer-stealers,' continued Lord Dewry, raising his head and speaking with determined firmness; 'no, I had a weightier object in view, I had a more serious offence to avenge.'

The peer paused; for although he was anxious to make the charge which he had determined to bring against the gipsy, boldly and distinctly to as many private individuals as possible, before he urged it in a public court of justice, yet he felt a difficulty, a hesitation, perhaps we might say a fear, in pronouncing, for the first time, so false an accusation against a fellow-creature, which was to be supported, too, by so many dark, and tortuous, and deceitful contrivances.

The next moment he went on. 'Colonel Manners,' he said, resuming his firmness, 'as I believe that the culprit may be considered in our power, and that therefore no indiscreet communication of my suspicions can give him warning to escape, I do not scruple to say that I have many reasons to suppose that this gipsy —this Pharold—is not only the murderer of my son, poor Edward, but that my brother's death also may be laid to his charge; and with a view of bringing him to justice for that offence it was that I, this very morning, took the surest measures for his apprehension, and not for any pitiful affair of deer-stealing, which might have gone long unpunished ere I exerted myself as I have done.'

'Indeed!' exclaimed Manners, gazing upon the peer in much surprise. 'How strangely do events sometimes come round!'

'Perhaps you are not acquainted with the circumstances of my brother's death,' replied the peer, marking some surprise in Manners's countenance; and in his anxiety to show the probability of the charge he had made overcoming his repugnance to speak upon a subject of all others the most dreadful to him. 'However, Colonel Manners,' he continued, 'he was killed by some one unknown many years ago, and the suspicions against this man Pharold were then so strong that good Mr. Arden, the magistrate, would fain have had him committed had I not foolishly interfered, from a weak conviction of his honesty. That conviction, however, has been since removed, and I may say that I have in my hands the most decided proofs of his guilt.'

Such was the explanation to which the apparent surprise of Colonel Manners led on the peer; but that surprise proceeded both from the new charge which the peer made against the gipsy being totally unexpected by his hearer, and from another cause which must be explained, as it touches upon some of those

little weaknesses of our nature, which Colonel Manners possessed in common with other human beings.

Through the whole affair, since he had discovered the traces of De Vaux's footsteps on the common, and the marks of bloodshed at the quarry, hope had offered to the mind of Charles Manners but one suggestion to diminish his apprehensions for the fate of his friend; and that suggestion, strange enough to say, was that the countenance, the demeanour, and the language of the gipsy Pharold were not those of a man familiar with guilt or designing evil. Colonel Manners was too much a man of the world, and too much a man of sense, to suffer such impressions to affect his conduct in the slightest degree. He knew that this earth contains every grade and every sort of hypocrisy, and that Satan himself will occasionally assume the form of an angel of light.

But during his conversation with Pharold he had remarked a dignity, not alone of manner but of thought, in the gipsy, opposed to all the habits of his tribe, and which must have been difficult to retain amongst them at all, but still more difficult to assume, if it was not natural and habitual,—if it sprang not from a heart at ease in itself, and a consciousness of virtue and intellect superior to the things through which it passed. His countenance, too, had appeared to him open and frank, though wild and keen; and Manners wished much to believe that vice or crime, in general, more or less affect the expression of the human face. All this had struck him; and though, as we have said before, he suffered not these impressions to affect his conduct in the least, opposed as they were to known facts, and circumstances of great probability, yet hope still whispered, surely that gipsy was not a man either to plan or to commit so dreadful a deed as the indications he had met with would have naturally led him to suspect. It may well be supposed, then, that the numerous and dark charges brought forward so boldly by the peer startled Manners not a little; and as he had no cause to believe that Lord Dewry was instigated by any motive to prefer a false accusation against the gipsy, he could only conclude that he himself had been deceived in his estimation of Pharold's character by the most skilful and consummate hypocrisy.

'I have heard some of the events to which your lordship alludes,' he replied, as soon as the peer paused; 'and was only surprised to hear such an unexpected aggravation of the suspicious circumstances which have already appeared against this man Pharold. I trust, too, that the measures which your lordship has taken may be successful for his arrest; but allow me to suggest that the unhappy news which I have had the melancholy duty of communicating ought to point out more extensive operations for the apprehension of the offender; as it is not at all impossible that this new offence may have entirely changed the circumstances, and may have put a stop to the attack upon your lordship's park, of which you received intimation.'

Lord Dewry struck his hand upon the table, perceiving suddenly the probability of Colonel Manners's suggestion, and anticipating, with rage and disappointment, the possible escape of the gipsy, or at least his evasion till such time as the arrival of Sir William Ryder in England might render the schemes he had planned, if not entirely impracticable, at all events highly difficult of execution, and dangerous to himself in the attempt.

'He shall be taken if it cost me life and fortune,' he exclaimed; 'but how, how? that is the question, Colonel Manners. What you say is true; the murder of my poor unhappy boy may have scared them away from the scene of their crimes, and most probably has done so ere this. What is to be done? how can we trace them? Pray advise me, Colonel Manners, if you have any regard for your unhappy comrade.'

His agitation was dreadful; and Manners saw that the only way to tranquillise him was to give him fresh hopes of the apprehension of those who had been instrumental in the death of his son. 'Most willingly will I give you any advice and assistance in my power,' he replied; 'but your lordship would be better able to judge what is most fitting to be done when you hear what I have already endeavoured to accomplish. My proceedings have been those of a soldier, but perhaps they may not be the less likely to be successful on that account.'

'The more,' cried Lord Dewry; 'but let me beg you to give me the details.'

'In the first place, my lord,' he replied, 'I have sent my poor friend's own servant, who is a keen and active fellow, to trace out the gipsies, and to follow the tracks we discovered on the common as far as possible. I have furnished him also with money to hire assistance and to buy information; and I directed him, as soon as his object was accomplished, to join me at Barholm with all speed. He had not, however, arrived when I passed the inn, and I ordered him to be sent on here as soon as ever he appeared.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Lord Dewry; 'but do you think there is any hope of his discovering the road the villains have taken?'

'Every chance, my lord,' replied Colonel Manners. 'In the first place, the tracks of the wheels, and the feet going in one particular direction, were too evident to leave a doubt in regard to which path they had taken at first. That path, I find, leads down to a hamlet where they must have been seen, and where the servant will most probably obtain the means of tracing them farther. But my next step, my lord, is, I think, likely to produce the still more desirable result, of placing in the hands of justice the particular individual whom we have the greatest reason to suspect. While we were examining the sand-pit, where the gipsies had been assembled, we discovered some one apparently watching the common from the wood; and whether at first he mistook us for some of

his own tribe or not I cannot tell; but he advanced some way towards us. As soon as I saw he was again retreating to the wood, I galloped after him; and though I unfortunately had not time to overtake him, yet I had an opportunity of satisfying myself very nearly to a certainty that this was that very Pharold whom I had once before seen on another occasion. I took measures as soon as possible for having the wood surrounded by a mounted patrol of as many men as it was possible to obtain, and I directed that any one who was apprehended in coming out of it should be instantly carried before Mr. Arden, to whom I had written a concise account of all the circumstances.'

The peer mused; for, as in every dark and complicated scheme of villany, the slightest alteration in the events which he had anticipated was likely to produce the most disastrous results to the schemer. 'If Pharold be carried at once before Mr. Arden,' thought the peer, 'the accusation which he has it in his power to bring against me may be made before I am aware of it, and that, too, to the very man who has the best means of comparing minutely, in the first stages of the proceeding, the present charge with the past circumstances. That the gipsy will ultimately tell his own tale, there can be no doubt; yet to make the first impression is the great object—to be the accuser rather than the accused — to attack rather than defend.' With such views, the probability of the gipsy being carried before Mr. Arden ere he had been prepared was anything but agreeable to the peer; and for a moment the anguish occasioned by his son's death was forgotten in apprehensions for the failure of his own deep-laid schemes.

'I will write myself to Mr. Arden,' he said at length, after long thought,—'I will write myself, and send off the letter this very night. Colonel Manners, excuse me for one moment. I have but a few lines to write, and will be back with you in a few minutes.'

Thus saying, he proceeded to his library, and with a hasty hand wrote down that bold and decided charge against the gipsy which was to bring the long-apprehended struggle between them to an end at once. Nor did he, in this instance, feel any hesitation, The words had now been spoken to Colonel Manners,—the charge had once been made; and it is wonderful the difference that exists between the first and second time of doing anything that is wrong. He wrote, too, though without any effort at policy, yet with the most exquisite art,—with that sort of intuitive cunning which much intercourse with the world, and its worst part, gives to the keen and unscrupulous. He referred, directly, to Mr. Arden's former opinion, concerning the culpability of the gipsy; he took shame and reproach to himself for his own incredulity at the time; he declared that subsequent events had shown the wisdom and clear-sightedness of the worthy magistrate's judgment, and he finished his letter by directly accusing the gipsy of the crime which Mr. Arden had suspected, doubting not that vanity would establish in the mind of the magistrate such a prepossession against the object of his wiles as to give everything in the important first steps that were to ensue a strong tendency against Pharold.

This done, he read the note over with satisfaction, sealed it, and sent it off, raised his head, and, gazing upon vacancy, thought for a moment over all the stern and painful circumstances that surrounded him, and then turned his steps back to the room where he had left Colonel Manners.

'I have now, Colonel Manners,' he said, as he entered the saloon, 'to apologise for leaving you so unceremoniously; but you will, I am sure, make excuse for feelings agitated like mine. To guard against the most remote chance of Mr. Arden suffering this Pharold to escape, I have formally made a charge, which I shall be able to substantiate, I am sure, concerning the death of my poor brother; and, next, let me beg you to give me your good advice in regard to what more should be done, in case the measures which you and I have separately taken should prove alike insufficient.'

'I would not wait, my lord,' replied Manners, 'to ascertain whether they were sufficient or not; but I would instantly take measures to guard against their insufficiency. You have, I think, only three contiguous counties here; had you not better send off messengers at once to the sheriffs and magistrates of those three, informing them of the circumstances, and begging them to stop any party of gipsies, or any person similar in appearance to this man Pharold? Your messengers, well mounted, will soon be far in advance of the murderer or his accessories, whose mode of travelling cannot be very rapid.'

The suggestion was no sooner given than it was assented to; and with all speed the necessary letters were written by the peer, who took as active and energetic a part in the whole proceedings as if he had been in his prime of youth. But it was a part of his character to do so. He could feel deep grief, it is true—and did feel it for the loss of his son—but grief with him led not to languor and despondency, but, on the contrary, to hate and to revenge: and as hunger, instead of weakening, only renders the tiger and the wolf more ferocious and more tremendous, so sorrow, instead of softening, only rendered him more fierce and more vehement. Ere the letters were sealed, however, it was announced that Mr. de Vaux's servant had arrived from Barholm, and inquired for Colonel Manners. With the peer's permission he was brought in; and bowing low to his master's father, by whom he was well known, he gave a full account of his search in answer to Manners's questions.

'Well, William,' demanded Manners, 'have you been successful?'

'Yes, sir,' replied the man; 'I believe I have seen the scoundrels housed, and have left those to watch them who will not watch them in vain.'

A glow of vengeful pleasure passed over the

countenance of the peer, and nodding his approbation, he leaned his head on his hand, listening attentively, while Manners proceeded. 'Give us the particulars, William,' he said. 'How did you first discover the gipsies?'

'Why, first, sir, I went back to the sandpit,' replied the man, 'and then I followed the tracks of wheels down to the bottom of the hill, by the road that leads to Newtown. At the bottom I found traces up the green lane, and I went on there for a mile, till I came to what they call Newtown Lone; but since I was there last some one has built a cottage there, and I asked the woman in the cottage if she had seen any gipsies, and which way they had gone. She said yes, she had seen them that morning, just after daybreak; but that when they had found a cottage there, they had turned down by the other side of the lone, through the lane that leads out again upon the high road beyond Newtown. So I followed them down there, and I tracked their carts across the high road, up the other lane, till I came to where it splits in two, the one going down to the waterside, and the other sloping up the hill to the common at the back of Dimden Park. Here there were wheels and footmarks both ways; and, after puzzling a little, I took the way down by the water, thinking they might have gone to lie amongst the banks there, as they used to do when I was a young boy in that neighbourhood. But after looking about for an hour, I could find nothing of them.'

'Then where did you find them at last?' demanded the peer, growing somewhat tired of the servant's prolixity; to which, however, Manners, who knew how important every little particular is in obscure circumstances, had listened with patience and attention.

'Why, my lord,' replied the man, 'I went back directly to the parting of the roads, and then took the one towards the common, above Dimden, which I had not chosen before; and there I rode on as hard as I could, with the cart-ruts and footmarks before me, till I came within about twenty yards of the common. Thereabout, there is a bit of low coppice, with some tall trees in the hedge-row; and my horse picked up a stone, so I got off to clear his hoof; and as I was just going to mount again, I heard some one call in a low voice, "William! William Butler!" so I looked round, but could see no one, and I said, "Well, what do you want? come out of the coppice, if you want me." So, then, from behind one of the tall trees, where he had planted himself on the look-out, comes Dick Harvey, your lordship's head park-keeper at Dimden; and he began asking after my health, and all I had seen in foreign parts. So I told him I would answer him another time; but I took leave to ask him in return what he was after, bush-ranging in that way; and he answered, "Oh, nothing; he was only seeing that all was right." So then I asked him again if he had seen e'er a set of gipsies in that direction, upon which he asked why, and I told him outright. "Don't go any farther, then," answered he, "for the bloodthirsty rascals are lying down there, between the park wall and the common, and it is them that I am watching." And he told me that he had discovered they were to steal the deer in the park that very night, and had laid a trap for them. However, I did not choose to come away without seeing them myself; so, asking Dick when they had come there, I told him he must get me a sight of them. He said that they had not been there much above an hour, and he took me into the coppice to where he had been standing himself. There I could see the whole party of them well enough lying about three hundred yards farther down the park wall, some of them still putting out their tents, some of them sitting on the wall and looking over into the park.'

'Was the park-keeper alone?' asked Manners, as the servant paused.

'He was alone just at that minute, sir,' replied the man; 'but he told me that he had five others within whistle, and that he had sent away the man who had been mounting guard where he then was to bring more. By this time, however, the sun was getting low; and Dick said he was sure enough the gipsies would not budge till they had tried for some of his deer. I told him not to let them go even if they had a mind; and he said to make my mind easy, for that before one o'clock in the morning he would answer for having the whole party of them in what used to be called the strong-room at Dimden House. I thought, therefore, sir, that I could not leave the matter in better hands than his, and I came away here to report myself; but as the horse was very tired I thought it best to take my time.'

'You have done well, William,' said Lord Dewry. 'Now go down and get some refreshment. It seems to me, Colonel Manners,' he added, as the servant retired, a gleam of triumph lighting up his dark countenance—'it seems to me that these men are in our power—that they cannot escape us now. It may be unnecessary, therefore, to send the letters which I have written.'

'I think not,' replied Manners. 'If you will consider a moment, you will see that, although some of the gipsies have been seen in the neighbourhood of your park at Dimden, yet we have no reason to be sure that the very man we seek is with them. Indeed, from the resemblance of the person I saw in the wood to this Pharold, we have some cause to imagine that even if he have joined his companions since, he was not with them in the morning.'

'You are right,' said the peer. 'In such a business as this no precautions can, indeed, be superfluous, and I will send off the letters at once.'

The bell was accordingly rung, and the epistles despatched by mounted servants, who each had orders to spare no speed, but to ride all night rather than suffer the communication to be delayed.

As soon as the servants had been despatched Lord Dewry bethought him that Colonel Manners might himself require some refreshment, and apologised for his previous forgetfulness. Manners, however, was fatigued, but not hungry, and he preferred some strong green tea—though not very soldier-like fare—to anything else that the peer's house could afford. This was soon obtained, and by the time it had been brought and taken away, the clock struck ten.

Manners then rose. 'If your lordship does not expect news from Dimden to-night,' he said, 'I will now take my leave; but should anything occur in which I can be of the slightest assistance, if you will send a servant, you will find me at the little town of Barholm, where I have ordered rooms to be prepared for me at the inn.

No two men that ever lived were more different in mind, in character, in tastes, and feelings, than Colonel Charles Manners and Lord Dewry; yet, strange to say, the peer did not like the idea of Manners's quitting him. A part of his uneasiness might arise in a dislike to be left alone in the long, long hours of expectation which were to intervene ere he could hear of the first step, in all his dark and complicated designs, having been safely taken; but there was something more in it too. Manners had assisted him with zeal, and talent, and energy, in the very pursuit which he was following; by an extraordinary concatenation of circumstances, he, unbribed, unbiassed, independent, upright, and noble, had been led to give his whole support to the very first object which the peer had in view; and for which he had already been obliged to hire and to intrigue with the low, and the mercenary, and the vile; and Lord Dewry felt a support and an encouragement in the presence and assistance of Colonel Manners which a thousand Sir Roger Millingtons could not have afforded.

'I believe, Colonel Manners,' said the peer in reply; 'I believe that I am about to make a very extraordinary request, but I really cannot allow you to leave me. A room shall be prepared for you here immediately, and it will be a real consolation to me if you will stay. I shall myself sit up till I hear from Dimden,' he added, in a tone of hesitation, as if he would fain have asked Manners to do the same, had it been courteous; 'but I am afraid that news cannot arrive till between one and two o'clock, and as you must be fatigued, I cannot ask you to be the partner of my watch.'

'I will be so most willingly, my lord,' replied Manners, 'for though I certainly am fatigued, still I am not sleepy, and I shall be anxious, too, to hear the news as soon as possible.'

They waited, however, longer than they expected—three, four o'clock came, and no tidings arrived. The moments, notwithstanding expectation, flew more calmly than might have been imagined. Lord Dewry, although he knew that there were few subjects on which he could speak with Colonel Manners without meeting feelings and opinions different from any that he now dared to entertain, knew also that there was one topic, and that one very near to his heart at the moment, on which he might discourse at ease. The topic was his son, and on that he conversed during the greater part of the night, effacing from the memory of his companion the rude and disagreeable impression which their first interviews had caused, and leaving little but grief, and sympathy, and regret.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE POACHERS.

From sunset till about nine o'clock there had been a light refreshing rain. Towards nine, however, the vapours that rested upon the eastern uplands became tinged with light; and, as if gifted with the power of scattering darkness from her presence, forth came the resplendent moon, while the dim clouds grew pale and white as she advanced, and, rolling away over the hills, left the sky all clear.

At a little before eleven o'clock, by which time the moon had risen high in the heaven, a rustling and scraping sound might have been heard by any one standing near that wall of the park which separated it from the neighbouring common, and in a moment after, the head and shoulders of a man appeared above the parapet. He gave a momentary glance into the walk which was immediately contiguous, and then swinging himself over, dropped at once to the ground. Pausing again, he looked round him more carefully, and then gave a low whistle. No one followed, however, and the intruder, who was apparently a lad of eighteen or nineteen, advanced cautiously across the walk, and was soon placed beneath the shadow of the tall elms. Every two or three minutes the lad paused to look around him, but as his eyes were more frequently bent upon the ground than raised, it appeared that he rather feared losing his way than apprehended the appearance of any other person in the place to which he had somewhat furtively introduced himself. Humming a tune as he advanced, he approached that part of the park from which a view could be obtained both of the mansion and the park-keeper's house; and here, fixing his eyes upon the latter, he seated himself at the foot of a sturdy chestnut tree at a little distance within the extreme edge of the wood.

There was a wreath of white smoke still curling up from the chimney of the peaceful-looking dwelling of the park-keeper, and through two of the cottage casements a full yellow light was streaming, so that it was evident enough that some of the inmates were up and awake. For about half an hour the young man kept his post with perseverance and tranquillity, ceasing to hum the air with which he had amused himself as he came along, and apparently regarding nothing but the cottage of the park-keeper,

At the end of that time, however, he rose, muttering, 'I'll stay here no longer. I might as well have been with Lena all this while. If Dick would but wait till one o'clock, they would be all abed to a certainty,' and he walked two or three steps resolutely away. Ere he was out of sight, he, nevertheless, turned to look once more. The light was still burning, but as he was in the very act of resuming his retreat, it was totally extinguished, and nothing was to be seen but the dark outline of the cottage in the clear moonlight. He now paused again for a moment or two, to be sure of the facts; and then retracing his way as fast as possible to the particular part of the wall over which he had obtained ingress, he stopped and whistled louder than before. For some minutes there was no reply, and he then whistled again, which instantly produced a corresponding signal from without, and a voice demanded, 'Is all right?'

'Ay, ay, Dick,' replied the lad, carelessly, 'all's right—come along.' The moment after, another head and shoulders appeared above the wall, and the gipsy whom we have seen with the old woman called Mother Gray, scheming the destruction of the deer belonging to some of the neighbouring gentry, swung himself up to the top of the wall, and gazed round with a more anxious and careful face than that displayed by his younger comrade.

When he had satisfied himself by examination, he handed over two guns to his companion, who was within the park; and then, dropping down again on the inside, gazed round him with more trepidation than his bold and confident language would have led one to anticipate. He was not alone, however, for no sooner had he effected his descent than three others, each also armed with an old rude fowling-piece, followed from without, and a whispered consultation took place in regard to their farther proceedings.

'Where did you see the deer herding to-night, Will?' demanded their leader; 'I mean at sunset.'

'Oh, those I saw were down at the far end of the park,' replied the boy, 'a mile off and more; up this wall will lead us.'

'The farther off the better,' replied Dickon. 'Are all your guns loaded?'

An answer was given in the affirmative, and, led by Dickon and the lad William, the party of gipsies crept stealthily along the path that proceeded under the wall to the far extremity of the park. Once or twice the leader stopped and listened, and once he asked in a low tone, 'Did you not hear a noise? there to the left?' No sound, however, was heard by his companions, who paused as he paused, and gave breathless attention with bended head and listening ear. A light breeze stirred the tree tops, and a leaf would now and then fall through the branches, but nothing else was to be distinguished, and as they passed the end of many a vista and moonlight alley, and looked cautiously out, nothing which could excite the least apprehension was perceivable, and they walked on, gaining greater courage as every step familiarised them more to their undertaking. By the time they had reached the end of the park wall, they ventured to carry on their consultation in a louder tone, and they also turned more into the heart of the wood, following paths with which none of them seemed very thoroughly acquainted, and the perplexity of which often caused them to halt or to turn back in order to reach the spot which they had fixed upon for the commencement of their exploits amongst the deer.

The lad Will, however, who had apparently reconnoitred the park by daylight, at length led them right; and taking a small footway towards the east, they found themselves suddenly upon the edge of an opening in the wood, through the midst of which ran a stream of clear water. A space of about five acres was here left without a tree, but on every side were deep groves of old chestnuts, and to the east some thick coverts of brushwood. It became necessary now to ascertain the direction of the wind, lest the deer should scent their pursuers, and take another road; and for this purpose, wetting his finger in the water, Dickon held it up high, till he discovered by the coldness that ensued which side it was that the wind struck. As soon as this important point was known, he disposed his companions in separate stations, but each by one of the old chestnuts, in such a manner and at such distances as would render it impossible for the deer to cross the open space before them without receiving one or more shots from some of his party. The sort of sport in which he was now employed seemed not altogether unfamiliar to the gipsy Dickon, whose instructions, if oral rather than practical, must have been very accurate and minute, as he wanted none of the skill or knowledge of an old sportsman.

As soon as his men were all properly disposed, and he had likewise taken up his own position in the most favourable spot that the place afforded, he sought out upon the ground a beech leaf, and having found one with some difficulty, bent it in the middle, and applied it to his lips. A quick percussion of the breath upon the bent leaf instantly produced a sound exactly resembling the cry of a young doe. After calling thus once or twice, he ceased, and all was attention; but no noise followed to indicate that any of the horned dwellers in the wood had heard or gave attention to the sound. Dickon again made the experiment, and again waited in breathless expectation, but without avail. After a lapse of some minutes, the beech leaf was once more employed, and the next instant a slight rustling sound was heard amongst the bushes beyond. The poacher repeated his cry, and there was then evidently a rush through the brushwood; but the moment after all was again still, and he began to think that the buck had scented them and taken fright.

In a minute more, however, not from the

bushes, but from the opposite chestnut trees, which the low wood joined, trotted forth, at an easy pace, a tall, splendid deer, bearing his antlered head near the ground, as if trying to scent out the path of his mate whose voice he had heard. The moment he came into the full moonlight, however, he stood at gaze, as it is called, raising his proud head and looking steadfastly before him. Then, turning to the right and to the left, he seemed striving to see the object that he had not been able to discover by the smell; but, as he was still too far distant for anything like a certain shot, Dickon once more ventured a low solitary call upon the beech leaf. Had it been loud, or repeated more than once, the poor animal was near enough to have detected the cheat; but, as it was, he was deceived, and trotting on for fifty yards more, again stood at gaze, with his head turned towards the trees under which the poacher was standing. Dickon quietly raised his gun, aimed deliberately, and fired just as the buck was again moving forward. The ball struck the deer directly below the horns, and bounding up full four feet from the ground, he fell dead upon the spot where he had been standing.

All the gipsies were now rushing forward to see their prize, but Dickon called them back; and keeping still under the shade of the trees, he made his way round to them severally, saying, 'We must have another yet. Let him lie there! let him lie! That one shot has not been loud enough to scare the rest, and I am sure there is a herd there down at the end of the copse; so we must have another, at all events; and if we go making a noise about that one, we shall frighten them. You, Bill, go round under those trees for five or six hundred yards, and then come into the thicket and beat it up this way.'

Bill did not undertake the task without grumbling and remonstrance, asserting that everything that was tiresome was put upon him, while Dickon and the rest had the sport. A little persuasion, however, overcame his resistance, and he set off accordingly to perform the part assigned to him. The others, in the meantime, resumed their places, and now had to wait a longer time than at first, for the youth, not very well inclined to the task, was anything but quick in his motions. At the end of a quarter of an hour, however, a rustle and then a rush was heard in the bushes, and then the bounding sound of deer in quick flight, and in a moment after the whole herd sprang into the moonlight, and crossed the open ground at the full canter. They came fairly within shot of two of the gipsies in their passage, and two guns were instantly discharged. Both took effect, but one of the deer was only wounded, and was struggling up again, when the whole body of poachers rushed forward and ended its sufferings with the knife.

'Now, now!' cried Dickon, hastily recharging his gun, 'we have got enough for once, I think; let us be off as soon as we can. We can hitch the venison over that nearest wall, and he turned to point in the direction to which he referred; but the sight which met his eyes at that moment almost made the powder-flask with which he was in the act of priming fall from his hands. Advancing from the chestnut trees, under which he himself had just been standing, was a party consisting of at least twelve strong men, apparently well armed, and he at once saw that all chance of escape for himself and his comrades without a struggle was over, as the keepers were coming up between them and the common, while on the other side lay the thick bushes from which the deer had issued, and in which his party must be entangled and taken if they attempted to fly in that direction, and to the westward, beyond the chestnut trees, were the river and the park-keeper's house. Now, however, that the matter was inevitable, Dickon showed more resolution than he had hitherto done. 'Stand to it, my men!' he cried, 'they have nosed us, by ——! There's no running now; we must make our way to that corner, or we are done.'

His companions instantly turned at his exclamation, and whatever might be their internal feelings, they showed nothing but a dogged determination to resist to the last. The man who had fired the last shot instantly thrust a bullet into his gun, which he had already charged with powder; and giving up their slain game for lost, the poachers advanced towards the angle of the wood nearest to the park wall, keeping in a compact body, and crossing the front of the other party in an oblique line. The keepers, however, hastened to interpose, and came up just in time to prevent their opponents from reaching the trees. Thus, then, at the moment that they mutually faced round upon each other, the left of the gipsies and the right of their adversaries touched the wood, but the odds were fearfully in favour of the gamekeepers.

'Come, come, my masters, down with your arms!' cried Harvey, the head keeper; 'it's no use resisting. Do you not see we are better than two to one?'

The first reply was the levelling of the gipsies' fowling pieces, and notwithstanding the superiority of numbers, and the anticipation of resistance, the keepers drew a step or two back, for under such circumstances no one can tell whose the chance may be; and the thought of unpleasant death will have its weight till the blood is warm. 'Stand off!' cried Dickon, boldly; 'master keeper, let us go free, or take the worst of it! We leave you your venison, and a good half ounce bullet in each buck to pay for our pastime; but be you sure that the guns which sent those bullets can send others as true, and will send them very speedily if you try to stop us.'

'A bold fellow, upon my honour!' cried Sir Roger Millington, advancing and standing calmly before the very muzzles of the gipsies'

guns. 'But hark ye, my good man, you came to get the venison, we came to get you; and, as we are rather more in number than you, it is not probable we shall let you escape. However, I will tell you what—to spare bloodshed, we will come to a compromise with you.'

'You are the spy of a fellow, are you not,' cried Dickon, 'who came this evening asking for Pharold? Well, my knowing cove, be you sure the first shot fired you shall have one.'

'But he speaks of a compromise, Dickon,' cried one of his companions, lowering the gun a little from his shoulder; 'better hear what he has to say.'

'Don't you believe a word,' cried Dickon, 'he's a cheat, and will only humbug you if you listen to him. We can bring four of them down at all events, and then must take our chance with the butt-ends of our pieces.'

'Yes, yes, listen to him,' cried another of the gipsies. 'What have you to say about a compromise?'

'Simply this, my men,' replied Sir Roger, who had still kept his place unconcernedly within a couple of yards of the gipsies' guns: 'if you will lay down your arms and surrender, we will make a bargain with you that we will let each one free on account of the deer-stealing against whom we cannot bring some other charge.'

Sir Roger's purpose was to catch Pharold, but he had not accurately calculated upon the state of a gipsy's conscience; and as each man present very well knew that something else—if not many other things—might be justly laid to his charge, the proposed arrangement was anything but satisfactory to the poachers. Nor was it more to the taste of Harvey and the other keepers, who had not been empowered by their employer to make any such compromise.

'No, no, sir,' cried Harvey, aloud, 'that won't do. My lord gave me no authority to make such a bargain. I dare say you came from him, for indeed no one else could tell you all about it. But, howsoever, I can't consent to that. No, no, I cry off. Lay down your arms, my lads, or we will fire on you directly.'

'Take that, then,' cried Dickon, pulling the trigger of his gun, the report of which was followed instantly by those of the fowling-pieces in the hands of the other gipsies, though at the very same moment—or rather, indeed, before the guns were discharged—a loud voice was heard shouting from a distance, 'Do not fire, villains! Dickon, I command you not to fire!'

Sir Roger Millington and one of the keepers dropped instantly, and a good deal of confusion took place amongst their party, though a straggling and ill-directed fire was returned, which only wounded one of the gipsies slightly. In less than a moment, however, the keepers had recovered themselves, and hurrying the wounded behind, were rushing on to close with their adversaries before they could reload, when a reinforcement of eleven or twelve strong men appeared behind the small party of the gipsies, and Pharold, rushing forward, thrust Dickon vehemently back, exclaiming, 'Mad fool! you have ruined us all for ever. Hold back!' he continued, addressing the keepers in the same stern and imperative voice, 'hold back, fools! we are too many for you. Richard Harvey, when you plotted to entrap these poor foolish young men, you should have secured the means of taking them. But get you gone while you may! We are too many for you, I tell you; and you know of old I am not one to trifle with!'

'I know you of old, sure enough, Master Pharold,' replied the head keeper, running his eye doubtfully over the group of powerful men who now stood before him. 'I know you of old, and I know you now; and one thing more I know, that you will come to be hanged before the year be many weeks older. I know that too, Master Pharold.'

'Lift me up! lift me up!' cried a faint voice behind. 'Lift me up, fellows, I say! I want to see him!' and in compliance with this command, one or two of the men who had accompanied the keepers raised Sir Roger Millington in their arms, and brought him a little forward, so that he could obtain a sight of what was passing. He gazed intently upon Pharold, who was still standing prominent, waving the head keeper and his party back with the air more of a prince than of one in his station and class. But the knight was unable to continue his observation of what was passing for more than a moment, as the agony he seemed to be suffering caused him to writhe so dreadfully that, after one brief, stern glance at the gipsy, he slipped out of the arms of those who supported him, and fell again to the ground. The sight of what he suffered, however, was not without its effect upon the keepers. Had they known him, and been interested in his fate, it might, indeed, have stirred them up to greater exertions in order to avenge the injury he had sustained; but unknown and indifferent as he was to all of them, his situation but served as an example of what they might themselves encounter if they persisted in their attack of the gipsies; and Harvey, who was the best inclined of the party to undertake the risk, soon gathered from the countenances of his companions that he would be but feebly supported, if not abandoned, in any farther attempt.

Unwilling, however, to yield the task he had undertaken, and inspired as much by sincere hatred towards the gipsies as by hope of recompense from his lord, he lingered, still glaring upon Pharold and his companions, and every now and then, in the bitterness of his disappointment, uttering such words as were likely to draw the adverse party themselves on to the attack which he feared to make upon them. 'You are a pretty set of blackguards!' he exclaimed. 'It would do my heart good to see you all hanged up in a row. Why can't you mind your kettles, and not come stealing other

folks' deer? You go kidnapping people's children; you do, you thieves of human flesh! Ah, you'll not go long unhanged, that's one comfort!'

Pharold's lip gradually curled into a look of bitter scorn, and, turning to one of his elder comrades, he whispered a few words to him, and a movement was instantly made on the part of the gipsies themselves to evacuate the ground. They performed their retreat, however, slowly and in good order, four of the party, directed by Pharold, bringing up the rear, and facing round upon the keepers whenever they approached, so as to render their flight secure. Harvey, with several of his companions, followed, somewhat encouraged by the sight of a retreating enemy; but two or three of the more charitable remained with Sir Roger Millington and the wounded keeper, though the latter was only slightly injured. At every two or three steps, also, as the others advanced in the pursuit, either weariness of the business altogether, or the better part of valour, caused one or two of the head park-keeper's comrades to fall off and return to the spot where they had left the wounded men. Thus, by the time the gipsies reached the park wall, only three persons followed Harvey; and Pharold, somewhat irritated by his close pursuit, turned round upon him with not the most placable expression in the world. In truth, he had been crossed and pained, and, for a moment, the evil spirit, which has a secret tabernacle in the heart of every one, came forth, and thought that the dominion was all his own. But the gipsy drove back the fiend, and restraining his inclination to take vengeance on the keeper, he merely commanded him sternly not to advance another step till all his people had cleared the wall. Harvey only replied by imprecations, and Pharold calmly proceeded to station four of the gipsies, who had guns, upon the top of the wall to protect the retreat of the others. Then, one by one, the gipsies passed over, their leader following the last, and the keeper, after giving way to one or two bursts of impotent wrath, turned on his heel and joined his companions.

Pharold and his party proceeded in silence to their encampment, which was not far distant, when, to the surprise of those who had been engaged in the deer-stealing, they found everything prepared for instant departure. The horses were to their carts, the tents were packed up, and only one fire appeared lighted, beside which old Mother Gray and the other women, protected by only one man, were standing, watching with somewhat downcast coutenances the solitary pot which was suspended above it. This group made instant way for Pharold and his comrades; and the former advancing into the midst, folded his arms upon his breast, and bending his brows sternly upon the old woman, he said after a bitter pause,—'See, woman, what your instigations have produced,—strife, bloodshed, murder; and, very likely, ultimately, the death of this poor fool, who suffered himself to be led by your bad counsels—very likely his death upon the gallows!'

'A very good death, too,' muttered the beldame, sullenly and low. 'His father died the same.'

'For you, Dickon,' said Pharold, not noticing her speech,—'for you, however ill you may have acted, your punishment is like to fall upon you soon; but you must hear my reproaches too. You have scorned authority throughout your life—you have forgotten the laws and habits of your fathers—you belong not to our people. Here we must all separate into small bodies, and take different ways, to avoid the consequences of your faults; but you shall go out from amongst us for ever, never to return. Answer me not, but hear! Had I not, by returning sooner than you expected, learned your errand, and hastened with the wiser and better of our people to stay your folly, and to bring you back—had I not come up in time, not, indeed, to prevent your crime, but to rescue you from the consequences, you would now have been lying, tied hand and foot, and waiting to be judged by those who hold us in hatred and contempt. From that you have been saved; but you must fly far, and conceal yourself well, to make such safety permanent. Go from us, then, go from us! and with whatever race of men you hereafter mingle—whether abjuring your people, as you have violated their rules, or whether seeking again some other tribe of the Romanicheel race—let the memory of all the evil that follows disobedience to those who have a right to command you, keep you from follies like those you have this night committed.'

Pharold paused, and one of the other gipsies whispered a word in his ear. 'True!' he said, 'true! as he has to wander far and long, he must not go unprovided. We will all contribute to help him.'

'No, no!' murmured Dickon, with his head sunk, and his eyes bent upon the ground, 'no, no! I can do without.' But the collection amongst the gipses was made without giving any attention to his words. Each contributed something from the part he had received in the distribution of the preceding evening, and a considerable sum was thus collected. Pharold, perhaps, feeling that the boon from his hand would come poisoned, suffered one of his companions to give the money to the culprit, and then proceeded:—'Go forth, Dickon! go forth! I warned you long ago—I counselled you, while counsel might avail; you heeded not my warning, you rejected my counsel! the time is past; and I have only now to bid you go forth from among us for ever!'

With his head still bent, and his eyes upon the ground, Dickon took two or three steps away from the rest. He then turned, and raising his head, fixed his eyes upon Pharold, apparently struggling to speak. Words, however, failed him: the stern glance of their leader met his, calm but reproachful; and suddenly turning a look full of fury at the old bel-

dame, who had misled him, the unhappy young man shook his hand at her, with a loud and bitter curse, and bounded away over the common.

'And now,' said Pharold, turning to his companions, 'let us separate quickly, to the east, and the west, and the north and the south, in the same parties into which we had divided ourselves last night, before the unfortunate accident made us change our plans. Let us travel rapidly and long, for be sure that we are followed by many and keen pursuers, who will spare neither gold nor speed, to catch us. Let all of us that are alive meet this day three months at our old tryste on Cheviot; and we may then, perhaps, pursue our way in peace.'

While he spoke, a light hand was laid upon his coat; and, as he ended, he found the beautiful eyes of Lena looking up in his face, with a glance of mingled apprehension and irresolution, as if she wished but feared to speak. 'What is it, Lena?' he demanded. 'You, of course, go with me and mine.'

'But William!' said Lena in a timid voice, 'William!'

Pharold's brow contracted. 'He goes with Brown!' he said sternly. 'What is it to you?' She coloured highly, and cast down her eyes; but still replied, 'Nothing, nothing, but where is he, I meant to ask? He went with Dickon and the rest—they made him go—and he has not returned.'

Pharold started and looked round, anxiously searching with his eyes for the lad amongst the groups that stood near, over whose wild countenances and figures the declining moon, and the half-extinguished fire, were casting together a flickering and uncertain light. 'Where is William?' he exclaimed, at length, turning to one of the men, who had accompanied Dickon on his predatory excursion against the deer; 'I saw but four of you when I came up. Where was William then?'

'Dickon had sent him round into the copse, a quarter of a mile off, to drive up the deer,' replied the man; 'but I am afraid they have caught him, for I heard a bit of a struggle in that direction, as we were making for the wall.'

Pharold clasped his hands, in angry disappointment. 'We must not leave the poor boy,' he said: 'I for one will stay at any risk, and try to help him.'

'And I, and I, and I!' cried all the gipsies.

'Well, then,' said Pharold, 'we must take means to make them think that we are gone; so that the nearer we lie to them the more completely will they be deceived. The wood on the other side of the common is thicker than anywhere else. Thither away, my men, on foot—all but five of you. Let those five take the carts down, by the back of the park, to the river. Turn them as if you were going down the road that leads along the bank. Then take out the horses and carry the carts over the gravel to the ford, so that no wheel-marks be seen. Put the horses in again when that is done; but mind to fill up the hoof prints with fresh gravel. Thus they will lose your track. You then take the ford and cross the river. The water is low, and you can drive along the gravel bank, on the other side, for near a mile, keeping in the water all the way. When it gets deep again take the road, and crossing back by the bridge, come down to the wood by Morley Road. Do you understand?'

'Yes, yes, I do,' replied the man he had called Brown. 'I know the country well. But where go you, Pharold, yourself?'

'I go back into the park to seek the boy,' replied the gipsy, 'and will join you all in the wood before daybreak. But, on your lives, keep to that wood behind us there; and go not near Morley Common or Morley Wood; for there are people on the watch there already. I should have been back in time to have prevented all this, had they not penned me in, in that very wood.'

'Well, well, we will do your bidding, Pharold,' replied Brown. 'You are a brave heart, and always take the danger upon yourself.'

'Quick, quick, then,' replied the gipsy; 'there is no time to be lost. Sarah Brown, take care of Lena; and see that that old woman,' he added sternly, pointing to Mother Gray, 'works no more mischief amongst us. Bad has been the fruit which all the seed of her planting has hitherto borne. You lead them to the wood, Wilson, and light a fire, that I may see the smoke as I come back.'

So saying, he sought in one of the carts for a moment; and drawing forth what is called a cut-and-thrust sword, buckled it under his coat, took the path to the lowest part of the park wall, and, vaulting over, was lost to the sight of his companions.

His orders, however, were now as promptly obeyed as if he had been present. Each of the gipsies, who were destined immediately for the wood, hastened to unload the carts as fast as possible. The women took their children on their backs, and large bundles in their hands; the men charged themselves with the heavier packages; and the carts, greatly lightened, having set off in the directions assigned to them, the rest of the party proceeded across the common towards the wood. They set off silently, and in straggling parties, that their footsteps might not betray their path; but they had not gone far ere the tongue of the old woman was heard, addressing one of the men who walked near her, at first in few words and a low tone, but gradually increasing in power and volubility, as it became encouraged by its own sound.

'He's a cruel, hard hand, that Pharold,' said she, looking carefully round; but her companion made no reply, and she went on. 'It's a hard thing for poor Dickon to be sent out to starve or be hanged, just because he was a spirity lad, and had different notions from that Pharold.' Still the other was silent. 'I often do wonder,' she continued, 'how a number of strong hearty men, every one a better man than Pharold, should submit to be led, and bullied.

and ill-treated, by an ill-looking thief like that, only because he comes from our old Dukes that are dead and gone.* It's all your own faults. If two or three of you were but to lay your heads together, and to say——'

'Come, come, you old rip,' broke forth the man, angrily, 'none of such talk to me, if you have not a mind to be pitched into that pond. Hold your tongue now, and give us no more of it. I am not one of your Dickons to be made a fool of; and if I hear you saying another word of such matters, I will have you sent after him you have got turned out from amongst us.'

Muttering a few words about 'tame fools,' Mother Gray slunk behind, and for a little while walked on in silence, only interrupted by occasional internal grunts and growls, expressive of her dissatisfaction and wrath. From time to time, however, she cast her eyes towards the straggling parties of her companions to the right and left; and for a while, her attention seemed principally directed towards a group of two or three, who walked on immediately upon her right, and amongst whom was one of those who had accompanied Dickon in his unfortunate expedition. But on the left, again, was a line of four or five other gipsies, principally women, followed by Lena, two or three steps behind the rest, with a large handkerchief cast over her head, and tied beneath her chin, in a manner which would have concealed the greater part of her beautiful face, even if it had been day, but which now served to veil it entirely from all observation. Her head leaned forward, however:—it was evident, too, that her eyes were cast upon the ground; and from these, and many another little symptom, the beldame, as she gazed upon her, concluded, and concluded rightly, that she was weeping. She hesitated no longer which of the two parties to join; but dropping slowly behind, she sidled quietly up to Lena, almost unperceived by the girl herself. After walking on a step or two by her side in silence, she ventured to say in a dolorous and sympathising tone, 'Poor Bill! only to think!'

Lena started, and for a moment said nothing in reply; but after a while, she asked, 'Do you think they have caught him, Mother Gray?'

'Ay, ay, they must have grabbed him,' replied the other, 'else he would ha' been back 'afore this time. Poor Bill! he was as handsome a spirity young chick as ever I set eyes on.'

There was something in hearing him spoken of in the past tense, as of one gone for ever, that brought a deep sigh from Lena's bosom; and the old worker of mischief went on, satisfied that she was now, at least, upon the right track. 'Ah, poor Bill,' she said, 'there was only one that was fit to match with him among us; and she was snapped up by a kite, before her right mate could come to her.'

Lena took no notice of her allusion, though it was sufficiently direct; but asked, 'What do you think they will do to him, Mother Gray, if they have caught him?'

'Hang him, perhaps,' replied the old woman, 'or at all events send him to what they call the colonies, to work their work like a slave—that's to say, if no one gets him out; but if he is so minded, Pharold, who is so sharp, will get him out fast enough.'

'If Pharold can get him out,' replied Lena, rousing herself at the name of one whom she revered, if she did not love,—'if Pharold can get him out, he will not be long in.'

'I dare say not,' replied the old woman, 'if it be not too dangerous, and cost too much time and trouble; and then Pharold, you know, will not like to risk the other people to save poor Bill,—unless, indeed, some one coaxes him to do it.'

'But how can I speak to him about it?' demanded Lena, holding down her head; 'he would give me hard words if I did, as he did to-night.'

'But Lena might risk a little for poor Bill,' rejoined the other; 'I know Bill would risk his life for her.' Lena was silent; and after a pause of some minutes the old woman went on, in a low voice, almost sunk to a whisper. 'Come, come, my pretty Lena,' she said, 'do try your hand with Pharold; else poor William may lie there for months in prison, with nothing to comfort him but songs about Lena—which he will sing sweetly enough, poor chap—and then may go to the gallows thinking of her. Do you think I do not see and know, my chick, all that is going on?'

'Then you see and know, Mother Gray, that I want to do nothing wrong,' replied the girl, turning half round upon her.

'Yes, but I saw you, Lena, when you stood by the park wall this evening,' replied the beldame, 'talking to Will for half an hour; and do you think I do not know what is in your heart, my pretty Lena?'

'Then why should I strive to get him out of prison at all?' said Lena, in a melancholy tone. 'It is better that he were away; and I can tell you what, Mother Gray, it was I made Pharold determine to send him away with Brown's people rather than have him along with us.'

'And I can tell you what, too, Lena,' replied the old woman, 'I saw you standing together by the wall, and I saw him come away, and I am very sure that it was because you were unkind to him that he went with Dickon and his people after the deer; so that it was your fault that he went at all, and your fault that he got into prison; so you should but help him out of it.'

What Lena might have replied, Heaven knows: but at the moment she was about to speak, she was interrupted by the approach of

* The gipsies of all countries still hold the persuasion that they were originally led into Europe by persons whom they term Dukes or Lords of Upper Egypt.

others of the tribe; and the whole party shortly afterentered the wood, and took up their camp in one of the deepest and most unfrequented spots that it contained.

In the mean time, Pharold had, as we have seen, entered the park, and here he spent the whole hours of moonlight that remained, in searching for the youth who had accompanied Dickon and his companions. He searched, however, in vain; and although he often risked the low peculiar whistle which he knew would be recognised by his fellow-gipsy, yet no sound was returned from any quarter. With much disappointment and regret, then, he saw at length the morning dawn; and certain that had the youth escaped he would by this time have joined the rest, he prepared to quit a place in which any longer delay might prove dangerous to himself, and could be of no service to him he sought.

There was, however, in his bosom, a misdoubting in regard to the lad's fate, an apprehensive uncertainty, which moved him, perhaps, more than if he had been assured of his capture; and ere he quitted the park, he approached as near as possible to the mansion, to see if any such signs of unusual bustle were apparent, as might furnish information to a mind habituated to extract their meaning rapidly from every vague and transient indication that met his eyes. As he stood beneath the trees, the first thing he beheld was a boy run up the steps of the house, and Pharold instantly concluded that it was a messenger returned with some news. The moment after three or four men issued forth; but instead of taking any of the roads that led from the house, they began to traverse the lawn between the mansion and the nearest point of the park wall. One man halted half way between, the others went on; but at the first trees again another paused, and Pharold thought, 'They have discovered me, and think to surround me, but they will find themselves mistaken;' and with a quick, stealthy step, he glided through the wood towards the angle of the park next to the common. None of his senses, however, slept on such occasions; and ere he had emerged from the bushes, his ear caught the sound of low voices, speaking in the very direction which he was taking, showing him that he had been discovered and pursued before he had perceived it, though the persons who were now before him must have come from the gamekeeper's house, and not from the mansion. Wheeling instantly, he retreated in a direction which led to one of the most open parts of the park; but Pharold was well aware of what he did, and knew the ground even better than those who followed him. As soon as he reached the savanna, he emerged at once from the trees, and with a quick step began to traverse the green. A man who had been stationed at the angle instantly caught sight of him, and gave at once the shout which had been appointed as a signal. The other keepers came up at a quick pace, narrowing the half circle in which they had disposed themselves, and penning the gipsy in between their body and the river. He scarcely hastened his pace, but allowed them to come nearer and nearer, till at length his purpose seemed to strike the head keeper suddenly; and, with a loud imprecation, he called upon the man nearest the water to close upon the object of their pursuit, adding, 'He is a devil of a swimmer!' But Pharold had been suffered to go too far. He sprang forward at once to the bank, plunged in without a pause, and in a few strokes carried himself to the other side, where, amidst thick brushwood and young plantations, he was perfectly secure from all pursuit.

CHAPTER XIX.

FOOTSTEPS ON THE SAND.

I KNOW no reason why we—the readers and the writer—should not now quit those characters which have lately been occupying us and return to others not less worthy of our care, till we have brought their actions and their feelings up to the same point of time whereunto we have conducted our other personages. The best form—perhaps I might say the most classical—in which a tale like the present can be related, with the exception of the autobiographical, is the dramatic; and holding strongly with the liberty accorded to British dramatists against the straight-waistcoat of Aristotelian unities, I believe that he who sits down to write a book like this has as much a right to shift his scene and change his characters when he pleases as a playwright.

For some time after Colonel Manners quitted Morley House, Marian de Vaux continued to sleep under the influence of strong opiates, which the medical man had found it necessary to give her in the morning. Whether he did right or wrong—whether it would have been better to let her meet grief boldly face to face, or was better to shield her from the violence of its first attack—each must judge as he feels; but he had known her from a child, and he had a notion that hers was a heart which would be easily broken if sorrow was suffered to handle it too roughly. At all events, while this state continued, she enjoyed a cessation from grief and apprehension; but still, how different was her slumber from the calm and natural repose of a heart at ease! The dull poppy with its leaden weight seemed to keep down and oppress feeling and thought, not to relieve and refresh them; and in her beautiful face, even as she slept, there was something which told that the slumber was not natural.

The apothecary had ventured on large doses of the drug, and Marian's slumber continued for many hours; but at length she woke, pale, languid, sick, with her ideas all confused, and yet her heart not the less ill at ease. 'Is that Isadore?' she said, gazing towards the window, at which

some one was standing, and over which the shades of evening were coming dim and fast. Isadore approached her bed, and Marian asked eagerly 'What news?' She could not put her question in a more distinct form, for her mind refused to fix itself with precision upon anything; and besides, with the common self cheatery of fear, she loved not to give her apprehensions voice.

'I have no news, dear Marian,' replied Isadore, sitting down by her. 'Sorry I am to say that Colonel Manners has returned without any tidings; and he has since gone over to my uncle's to see whether anything may be known there in regard to these extraordinary circumstances.'

Isadore had framed her answer with a view of alone hiding from Marian that anything had been discovered to confirm their fears, and of turning her mind from the search on which Colonel Manners had been employed; but the result went further than she had expected, or even wished; for it was her purpose only to break the force of grief, not to raise expectations which were likely to be disappointed. Hope, however, is the most adroit of diplomatists, and takes hold of the slightest word or circumstance in its own favour with skill and agility unparalleled. The words of Isadore, simple as they were, lighted again in a moment the half-extinguished flame in the bosom of her cousin. She remembered the suspicions concerning the illegitimacy of his birth, with which Edward had gone to visit the gipsies; she remembered his fiery and impatient nature, and the agitation into which even the apprehension had thrown him; and hope instantly suggested that he might have found his fears confirmed, and, wild with anger and distress, might have flown instantly to his father's house.

It is true he was on foot; it is true he had quitted the house during the night; it is true that he was not likely to take such a step without writing to relieve her mind; but it is the quality of hope to trample on improbabilities, and Marian de Vaux obtained a momentary relief. Still she would fain have had her hopes confirmed by the opinion of others: but she could not expect to do so without explaining the reason why she entertained them; and that reason could not be explained without entering into some details in regard to Edward's communication with the gipsy, which she knew not whether she were justified in making. Her mind was so confused with the effect of the remedies employed to obtain sleep, that she was long in determining what was the best to do, and remained silent, while Isadore kindly and gently strove to suggest as many motives for consolation as she could imagine. At length, however, as Marian revolved all the probabilities in her mind, she recollected that other causes might render the disclosure of Edward's feelings and intentions necessary; that he might not be found at his father's house; that strict and immediate investigation might be required; and that, under those circumstances, a knowledge of all that her lover had proposed to do previous to his sudden disappearance, might be requisite to those who were employed in searching for him, in order to render that search at all effectual; and although she shrank from the idea of betraying, in the slightest degree, the confidence he had reposed in her, yet she felt it necessary to give every information in her power which might lead to the result they sought. She determined, then, at length, to speak of what had passed between De Vaux and herself on the preceding day; and only hesitated whether to relate it to her aunt or to her cousin. Mrs. Falkland's kindness and strong good sense were not to be doubted; but yet Marian knew Isadore thoroughly, and knew that there was more judgment and tact under her usual gaiety than was apparent. She knew, too, that with her she should be able to relate and to keep back just as much as she thought proper; while her aunt's keen and rapid questions, she felt, might draw from her more than she was justified in communicating.

'Do you know, Isadore,' she said, at length, 'I am in some hopes that Edward may be heard of at his father's house: it would not surprise me if he had gone thither.'

Isadore felt that she had a delicate part to play. She was glad to see that Marian was more composed than she could have expected; and, of course, she would have wished to maintain that state of composure, till apprehension gradually changed into grief, without any new shock to her feelings: but she still felt that she had no right to encourage hopes which must soon be broken; and she replied, 'I am very happy, dearest Marian, that you do think so; but is it not strange that he should go thither, and be so long absent, without letting any one know, when he must have felt that so many would be uneasy?'

'It is strange,' replied Marian; 'but I think I can account for that. I am about to tell you something, Isadore, which you must make what use of you think fit, in case Colonel Manners has not found poor Edward at Dewry Hall; but as it refers to matters which he might not wish told to any one, you must ask me no more than I am inclined to speak; and unless it be necessary, perhaps, had better not mention it to any one but my aunt.'

'I will obey you to the letter, dear cousin,' replied Isadore; 'but I foresee that you are going to speak of his visit to the gipsy, which, indeed, surprised us all.'

'It is the cause of that visit I am about to tell you,' answered Marian; 'for perhaps the facts connected with it may throw some light on the business, if Edward be not at his father's. But you remember, Isadore, that Colonel Manners went up yesterday morning to the gipsies —I believed, because you teased him about them.'

'Yes, indeed, I believe it was one of my silly jests,' replied Isadore, with a sigh, 'that made

him go at all. I shall leave off jesting for the future, Marian.'

'Nay, nay! never, Isadore!' replied Marian, shaking her head. 'However, Colonel Manners brought Edward down a letter from one of them called Pharold, which distressed him a great deal; for it told him things concerning our own family, and his part of it particularly, which would be very terrible if true. He determined, after speaking to me upon the matter, to go up to the common this morning, in order to investigate the whole; and if he found any reason to believe that the gipsy spoke the truth, his mind, I am sure, would be in such a state that he would hardly know what he was doing. Under these circumstances, it is very likely that he might go over at once to inquire more of his father, without thinking of anything else in the pain and anxiety of the moment.'

'No, Marian, depend upon it, he would think of *you*,' cried Isadore, somewhat incautiously.

'I could easily forgive him for not doing so,' replied Marian, 'notwithstanding all the pain I have suffered, if I could be sure that he is safe at the Hall.'

'Pray God it may be so!' replied Isadore; 'and if it be, we shall undoubtedly hear from Colonel Manners to-night.'

There was something so despairing in the tone with which Isadore pronounced 'Pray God it may be so!' that Marian took alarm. 'Isadore,' she said, looking at her steadily, 'I hope you are not deceiving me. Your heart is not one to be so easily cast down; your lips, dear cousin, are not accustomed to such sad sounds. Tell me the truth, Isadore, I beseech you.—Have you heard anything of Edward?'

'No, indeed, Marian!' replied Isadore, glad that she had put her question in such a shape that she could give it a negative; and yet hesitating a little at the utterance of one word approaching insincerity,—a vice that her mind had never known. 'No, indeed,' she said; 'no one has heard anything of him as yet.'

Marian marked her hesitation, however, and replied in a low voice, 'I should always like to know the truth, Isadore; and I am sure you would tell it me, dear cousin. You know how I love Edward; and I think it no shame to acknowledge to you, Isadore, that I do not believe there ever was a human being that loved another as I have loved him.' She paused; and though she knew that Isadore needed no new insight into her heart, to see how totally that heart was given to Edward de Vaux, yet, as she spoke, the crimson came again into her cheeks and mottled her brow and temples, even to speak her love in the hearing of one who already knew it so well. 'Nevertheless, Isadore,' she continued, 'feeling afraid of my own heart, and my own great happiness, I have schooled myself to remember that the blessings of this world are anything but permanent; and have prepared myself to say, if God should require me to yield them, "Thy will be done." Of course, since Edward went into active service, I have felt it the more necessary to be always thus prepared; and though I have tried not to embitter existence by apprehensions, nor to keep myself in continual fear, I have endeavoured never to forget that Almighty Wisdom may hourly require sacrifices, at which we must not repine.'

'You are indeed a sweet creature!' cried Isadore, casting her arms round her cousin's neck; 'I wish that I were half as good!' Marian leaned her brow upon her cousin's shoulder; and when Isadore again looked at her, she found that Marian was weeping.

In a few moments Marian wiped away her tears, and went on: 'You will think that, after boasting of all this preparation, I ought not to be so overcome now—nor, indeed, so much as I was this morning; but the truth is, when Edward returned, half my fears vanished. I thought that all danger was over; and little remembered that he who had escaped from battle and from storm, might be snatched from me in the bosom of peace, and in his own home. But I am better now, Isadore, and firmer, and stronger; and therefore I will beg you, and my aunt, to let me hear at once everything that occurs; for though you are interested too, I know, deeply and sincerely, yet you can neither of you feel as I do.'

'Perhaps that is the very reason, dear Marian,' replied Isadore, 'why it would be better to keep from you all the rumours and reports, which could only rack all your feelings with alternate hopes and fears, without leading you even to any certain conclusion.'

'Oh no!' said Marian; 'no! let me hear all, Isadore! I am now again prepared; I do not say that I shall not weep—I do not say that I shall not be anxious—I do not say that I shall not tremble with hope and fear; but I do say, Isadore, that the knowledge of whose hand it is that guides the whole; and my firm, perfect, undoubting, unchangeable belief that His will is mercy, and His way is wise; will be my support and consolation to the end.'

'And I will never believe,' said Isadore warmly, 'that He will leave such confidence unrewarded and unprotected.'

'Oh, no!' answered Marian: and she then added, in a sadder tone, 'but He, seeing more wisely than we do, may yet think fit to afflict us, Isadore. However, I am still prepared, and will meet whatever may come, as little repining as I can.'

The conversation proceeded for some time in the same tone, nor was its effect small in soothing the mind of her who suffered; for, in moments of grief, the human heart forgets all the treasured consolations which reason, and philosophy, and religion have garnered up in years of tranquillity; and it is not till we examine the stores that we have gathered, that we remember the sources of comfort which we ourselves possess.

Marian then expressed her intention of rising, and begged Isadore to send her maid from the

dressing-room. Her cousin would fain have dissuaded her; and proceeded to inform her mother of Marian's intention of coming down to the drawing-room; but Mrs. Falkland did not disapprove of the idea, especially when she learned from Isadore the state of her niece's mind. 'We must endeavour,' she said, 'to keep any sudden tidings of evil from our poor Marian; but in other respects, perhaps, occupation of any sort may do her good; for I know too well, Isadore, that nothing can be worse than the fears and the pains with which our own imagination fills up the interval of suspense, when, alone and sleepless, we sit and watch away the weary hours, till doubt and fear have grown into the too painful certainty.'

Marian was not long in following her cousin to the drawing-room; and though a few tears rolled over her cheeks as Mrs. Falkland pressed her to her bosom, she soon regained at least the appearance of composure. By degrees she learned all that Colonel Manners had discovered, except the indications which most strongly tended to confirm his apprehensions for De Vaux; and she heard, also, all that he had done towards obtaining further and more certain information. Marian, however, inferred, from the measures that had been taken, that both her aunt and Manners did entertain serious fears; and her heart sunk to find her own alarm confirmed by that of persons so much more thoroughly acquainted with the world than herself. Soon after she had come down, the servant, who had been despatched to Mr. Arden, returned with the tidings that he was absent from his own house, and was not expected back till the next morning. Inquiries, too, were made by the people who had been left to guard the wood, whether it were necessary to keep up their patrol all night; and in Manners's absence, Mrs. Falkland ordered it to be done at any expense. Many a rumour, too, of many a likely and many an unlikely occurrence, reached the drawing-room through the old butler, who, with one other man-servant, had been retained in the house while the rest had been despatched to reinforce the people on watch round the wood.

Thus passed the evening, but no tidings arrived from Colonel Manners; and as minute after minute, and hour after hour, went by, after the period which they calculated might have brought them the news of De Vaux's being at his father's house, the hopes of all the party sunk lower and more low, and at a late hour Mrs. Falkland persuaded Marian again to go to bed.

Sleep, indeed, visited Morley House but little during that night; and the next morning early a note was received from Colonel Manners, informing Mrs. Falkland that nothing as yet had been heard of De Vaux. So far Mrs. Falkland communicated the tidings she had received to Marian, before she had risen; and, notwithstanding all the fortitude she had endeavoured to assume, and the most careful guard she had been enabled to put upon her heart, yet Marian had so far encouraged hopes which now suffered disappointment, that medical aid was again obliged to be called; and it was judged expedient once more to dull her sense of grief and fear by strong opiates. The latter part of Colonel Manners's communication, which spoke in plain terms of the murder of poor De Vaux, Mrs. Falkland did not, of course, read to her unhappy niece. In it, however, he informed her, that when he had arrived at Dewry Hall, he had found measures already in progress for arresting the supposed murderers upon another charge, and had waited to know the result. They had proved, unfortunately, without effect, he said; as no one had been taken but a lad, from whom he was afraid little satisfactory information was likely to be gained; but still it was his purpose, he added, to go over to Dimden with Lord Dewry, previous to returning to Morley House, in order to hear personally what evidence could be extracted from the prisoner. In conclusion, he recommended if Mr. Arden had not taken measures for searching the wood in which the gipsy had been seen, before his letter arrived, that such a step should be resorted to directly; as the messenger who brought the news of the affray at Dimden, had not been able to say whether Pharold were present or not.

After the receipt of this letter, Mrs. Falkland waited anxiously for the arrival of Mr. Arden; but it was late ere he came. He then asked eagerly what further discoveries had been made, and Mrs. Falkland communicated to him the substance of Colonel Manners's letter. The old gentleman, whose heart was warm and kind, notwithstanding a certain degree of severity of manner, and a persevering adherence to the letter of the law, which often made him appear harsh and unfeeling, sympathised truly with De Vaux's family, and spoke of Marian and the state of bereavement and distress into which her cousin's loss must have cast her, with words of tenderness and pity which brought a bright drop or two even into his own eyes. He then touched as delicately as his nature permitted upon the subject of Lord Dewry's letter to him, which he had received that morning; and triumphed a little in the accuracy of the opinion he had formerly given in regard to Pharold the gipsy being the real murderer of Mrs. Falkland's late brother.

Mrs. Falkland started, and combated the idea with various arguments which had been satisfactory to her own mind at the time. Mr. Arden, however, informed her that, in his letter of that morning, Lord Dewry had asserted that he had acquired positive proofs of the gipsy's guilt; and Mrs. Falkland was silent, but not convinced. That Pharold, either in some fierce dispute, or in some accidental affray, might have killed her unfortunate nephew, or that his companions might have done so, without his will or concurrence, Mrs. Falkland did not doubt; but she had heard too much of his character and behaviour in youth, to believe that, twenty years before, when he was still a young man, he could have been so hardened in guilt, as, for the pur-

pose of paltry plunder, to take the life of the only man for whom, with the exception of his own tribe, he had shown affection. For Lord Dewry's fierce accusation on the present occasion, she accounted easily by a knowledge of his character, and conceived it very possible that the rage and hatred which he felt at the very idea of the gipsy having murdered his son, might make him regard as proof positive any slight additional suspicions, which he had found cause to form against Pharold in regard to his brother's death. However, as she took no pleasure in speaking of her brother's weaknesses, she made no answer; and Mr. Arden began his proceedings for the purpose of causing the wood, in which Colonel Manners imagined he had seen Pharold, to be so thoroughly searched as to ascertain, beyond a doubt, whether the gipsy still remained in it or not.

As all those who have attempted to search a wood must know, the task is not an easy one; and before a sufficient number of people could be collected, and all the orders and directions could be given, it was late in the day. As the men, however, who had kept patrol for so many hours, were now weary of the task, and there existed many doubts whether any inducement would make them undertake it during another night, there was no possibility of delaying the search till the following morning; and Mr. Arden accordingly set out, taking as many of Mrs. Falkland's servants with him as could by any means be spared, in order to make their proceedings as effectual as the short remaining space of daylight permitted.

During his absence, Mrs. Falkland and her daughter remained in that painful and exciting state of suspense, in which every minute has its expectation, and every minute its fear; and as Marian still slept, Isadore walked out into the garden in hopes of finding some refreshment in the cool air of the autumn evening. When she had passed about half through the garden, with her eyes turned mechanically from time to time upon the flowers, but with her thoughts far otherwise occupied, she perceived a boy of about ten years of age, who worked under the gardeners, approaching her, cap in hand.

'Please, miss,' he said, 'I think I have found out something.'

'And pray, what have you discovered, Harry?' demanded Isadore as he paused.

'Why, ma'am,' answered the boy, 'I heard the gentleman yesterday, and all the folks, indeed, talking of footsteps, and asking where there were any to be seen, in sorts of unlikely places——'

'And have you found any?' exclaimed Isadore, speaking eagerly, from some of those vague and often fallacious anticipations which rush upon the mind in thousands, when it is excited by any strongly moving cause.

'Why, yes, ma'am; you see,' replied the boy, 'the gardener, when he was going away to search the wood, sent me down to the other side of the park to cut some box for the borders, and by the little door, close by the river, which has not been opened these two years, I saw the marks of a gentleman's foot in the gravel, which is softish down on that walk, and greenish, too, for it ha'nt been turned this autumn.'

'But how do you know it was a gentleman's foot?' demanded Isadore. 'It might be either the gardener's, or the under-gardener's, or the gamekeeper's, for anything you know, Harry.'

'No, no, miss,' answered the boy, 'I know it was a gentleman's, for they have little feet, and this was not bigger than mine—and it was not a woman's foot, because the heel was different.'

'And a boy's?' said Isadore; 'why might it not be a boy's?'

The youth rubbed his head, saying, 'It might be a boy's, miss, but I do not think it, miss, anyhow. I am sure it was a gentleman's—quite sure.'

Isadore endeavoured to discover the grounds of this certainty; but when people whose ideas are not very clear upon a subject are pressed by those who would fain help them to disentangle the ravelled skein of their thoughts, they not unfrequently take refuge in a sort of blank stolidity which prevents others from finding out the causes that they themselves are not able to explain. Such was the case in the present instance; and the only answer that Isadore could obtain to her questions, shape them how she would, was, that he—the boy—was sure that the footmarks were those of a gentleman.

With these tidings, however, with every willingness in the world to believe that they were true, and with a long train of phantom hopes to boot, Miss Falkland returned to her mother, taking the boy to the house with her. Mrs. Falkland listened with attention, and replied that it would be at least worth while to send down the old butler directly to ascertain the facts more precisely.

'Oh! for Heaven's sake do not send him, mamma!' exclaimed Isadore. 'He is so fond of miracles that he will declare it is the foot of an elephant. We shall never come at the truth from him.'

'But whom can I send, then?' demanded her mother. 'All the other servants are away, and both the gardener and under-gardener are with Mr. Arden.'

'I will go myself, mamma,' replied Isadore. 'I shall have plenty of time to get there and back before it is dark, and I will take the boy with me to show me the place.'

'You are right, Isadore,' replied Mrs. Falkland. 'The fact may be of no importance, but it may be of much, and, consequently, it is worth our own examination. I will go with you, my love, if Marian be still asleep. Wait one moment, and we will go and judge together.'

Mrs. Falkland was not long absent. Marian was still lying overpowered with the opium, and the two ladies, having joined the boy in the hall, set out upon the search. While her mother

was absent, however, Isadore called her own maid, and stationed her at one of the windows, whence she could see the spot to which the boy referred, and the path leading to it. She gave her also directions to remain there, and, in case of either Mrs. Falkland or herself making a signal, to send or come down to them in all haste. 'I feel a sort of presentiment,' thought Isadore, as she gave the orders, 'that this expedition will end in something of importance.'

Whatever it was likely to end in, the maid obeyed her orders as punctually as such orders generally are obeyed, that is to say, she remained two minutes at the window, and, having seen Mrs. Falkland and Isadore walk about a hundred steps upon the path, she thought, 'Dear me! I can just get the cap I was trimming, and be back again here long before they are at the other side of the park.' But, as she crossed the hall, she met with the old butler, who detained her just to ask her where his mistress and Miss Falkland were gone, and then told her a story which he had heard when he was young, and the incidents of which were very like those connected with the fate of poor Mr. Edward de Vaux. Every hair on the maid's head stood on end, and gave her so much occupation, that ere she could get back to her post, it was too dark to trim the cap any further; she therefore, immediately and punctually, turned her eyes on the spot which her mistress had directed her to observe, and watched most carefully, now that she could see nothing at that distance.

CHAPTER XX.

ISADORE IN PERIL.

ISADORE and Mrs. Falkland, in the meantime, took the little path towards the brink of the river, in the immediate neighbourhood of which lay the spot where the boy had remarked the footsteps. Mrs. Falkland had lived too long in the great school of disappointment, human life, to suffer her expectations to be greatly excited; but Isadore, with a spirit naturally more enthusiastic, and as yet unchastened by any deep sorrows, felt her heart beat high, and her hopes struggle up against her fears, as she set out to take a more active part than she had hitherto been able to assume in the search for her cousin. The path wound along through the park, meandering considerably, perhaps in conformity to the taste of some ancient layer-out of parks, or perhaps in consequence of the usual round-about and circuitous nature of man's paths. Isadore, like all ardent minds, was tempted to make a more direct way for herself across the lawns; but Mrs. Falkland, in a more practical spirit, remembered that the grass was damp, and that it was not worth while to wet her feet for the purpose of saving half a minute. She adhered, therefore, to the gravel, and, as her more venturous daughter met with a little swamp, occasioned by a spring, which obliged her to go round, they arrived at the spot they sought about the same time.

The spot itself, however, needs some description. We will, therefore, take a view of the scene as it was presented to the eyes of Mrs. Falkland and her daughter, who were at that moment looking exactly west-north-west. Before them was a little shrubbery of evergreens and indigenous plants, kept as low as possible, so as just to hide the wall of the park against which it rested, and yet not to cut off from the windows of the house a beautiful rocky bank which rose on the other side of the wall to the height of a great number of feet. This bank formed one of the faces of a small wooded promontory, or rather peninsula, which was joined on to the hills by a narrow neck over which the high road passed after having skirted the other wall of the grounds. It was surrounded everywhere but at that point by the river. The summit was covered with rich wood, and down the sides also, in every place where the rock did not rise up abrupt and bare, a thousand various trees and shrubs had rooted themselves in the clefts and crevices, or towered up like pinnacles from the top of every detached fragment, and overhung the calm, still bend of the river, which served as a mirror to all the beauties round about it. The setting sun, with his lower limb just resting on the western hills, was pouring a flood of splendour down the valley of the stream, and his full light bursting upon the face of the rock to the left of Mrs. Falkland and Isadore, found its way round in bright catches of purple light, illuminating every tree and angle of the rock that stood forward before the rest.

Pouring on, too, the beams streamed down the little footway which—cut through the low shrubbery to a door in the wall—led out to another path running from the high road to the river between the park and the cliff, and by the clear light thus afforded, it was easy to see the marks of which the boy had spoken. They seemed to have been made by some one coming from the grass on the side of the river upon the soft gravel of the path, and had turned suddenly towards the door where they disappeared as if the person had passed through. They were small, too, as the boy had described, and were evidently not a woman's, but neither Mrs. Falkland nor Isadore were sufficiently well acquainted with De Vaux's footprints to feel anything like certainty concerning them. It were vain to deny, however, that the hopes of both were raised, though Heaven knows those hopes were vague and indistinct enough. Had either Mrs. Falkland or Isadore been asked what they expected to find, they would probably have answered, 'Edward de Vaux;' but had they been required to assign a reason for such expectations, to account for his absence, or to point out any principle upon which he could have abandoned the society of those he loved, and yet linger in their neighbourhood, they

would have been embarrassed for a reply. But affection does not pause to argue. Hope, too, is ever most powerful when she triumphs over reason, and though it may seem a paradox, expectation is never so vivid as when we know not what we expect. As Mrs. Falkland gazed on them, and traced them distinctly to the door, she exclaimed, 'How very stupid it was of me not to bring the key!'

'I have a key, ma'am,' said the boy, groping in the pocket of his jacket; and producing it accordingly, he advanced to the door and opened it. Mrs. Falkland now looked eagerly for more traces, but none were to be seen close to the door, though the ground was composed of a reddish sort of sand which would easily have taken the print of even a light foot. At the distance, however, of about five feet were to be seen two deep marks of the same kind, but close together, with the heels more profoundly indented in the sand than the front of the foot, and it became evident that some one had leaped from the top of the wall. This was made still clearer when, turning back, Mrs. Falkland examined the door, on the top of the lock of which several patches of gravel had been left by the foot of some one who had taken that means to reach the summit of the wall. In the meantime, Isadore was eagerly tracing on the footprints which led straight from the deeper marks to the bank, and on one of the large stones close by the river, she soon found the impression of a foot in red sand, stamped upon the green mould with which the fragment of rock was covered.

'Here, mamma, here,' cried Isadore,—'he must have passed here, and that since the rain of last night, too; for, if you look, the marks are quite sharp, while some old ones going down towards the water are nearly washed away. I should not wonder if he were here now.'

'Hark!' said Mrs. Falkland: 'did you not hear a noise above there?'

They listened, but all was silent; and at length Mrs. Falkland added, 'We have done wrong, my love, in not bringing more people with us, even if they were but women. The wood is so small, and so shut in by the river, that it might be searched easily.'

'Send the boy back to the house, mamma!' cried Isadore, quickly, 'he can bring down the butler, and probably some of the others may have returned. We can remain here and watch till they come.'

'But, Isadore,' said Mrs. Falkland, gravely, 'it is growing dusk and late, and the place is lonely and obscure. I do not see any good that two women can do here alone.'

'Oh, Harry will be back in a moment, mamma,' cried her daughter; 'and, besides, nobody could hurt us. Any one on the high road would hear a scream from this place.'

Mrs. Falkland still hesitated, but Isadore continued, eagerly, 'I will tell you how we can manage it, then, so that there can be no danger. Send him back for the people, and you go into the park to the little mound, there you can see the high road quite across the point.'

'But I will not leave you here alone, my love,' cried Mrs. Falkland, in some surprise at the proposal; 'indeed I cannot think of doing that.'

'But, mamma, I have been here a hundred times alone before,' replied Isadore; 'and, besides, what I mean is, to get up to that little point where Marian and I have sat many a day. When I am there, you will be able both to see me and to hear me if I speak to you; and, if any danger were really to happen, I could make the people with the cattle in the opposite meadow hear me, while you could also make them see or hear from the house, and I set Charlotte at the window to watch.'

Mrs. Falkland still hesitated, but Isadore continued rapidly, 'Run, Harry, up to the house as fast as ever you can go. Bring down Mr. Gibson and any of the men you can find, and do not lose a minute.'

'I am afraid that this is not very prudent, Isadore,' said Mrs. Falkland, as the boy ran off like lightning; 'but I suppose your plan is the best one to follow now that he is gone. I will turn back to the mound, then, while you go up there. But if the boy does not return before the twilight grows thicker, come down by all means.'

'I will come down whenever you tell me, mamma,' said Isadore, 'and I can hear everything you say at the mound.'

Without more words, then, Mrs. Falkland hastened to take up her station at a little rising ground in the park, from the summit of which she could see not only the whole of that part of the high road which crossed the neck of the little promontory, but also the extreme angle of the cliff above the river. Isadore in the meanwhile climbed up by a steep and somewhat rugged path, which had been made at her request some years before, to a small point of rock which commanded a view both up and down the river, and afforded one of the most picturesque landscapes on either side that the country possessed.

The height was not more than ten or twelve feet above the stream, and the distance from the mound in the park not a hundred yards, so that any one speaking in a loud voice could be heard from one spot to the other. The ascent, however, while it continued, was steep, and Isadore's heart beat when she reached the top—nor, perhaps, was it the exercise alone that made it palpitate. Although she had not displayed any fear, she was not without some slight degree of alarm, and felt not a little of that sort of excitement and agitation which is not indeed fear, but which often produces very similar effects. She looked back as soon as she reached the point of the rock, but Mrs. Falkland was not yet in sight. Another instant, however, brought her mother to the top of the mound, and Isadore demanded, 'You can see the high road, mamma, can you not?'

Mrs. Falkland did not at first distinguish

what her daughter had said, and Isadore repeated the question. Not that in this inquiry she was at all influenced by fear, although it might appear so; but, in truth, Isadore's eagerness to send back the boy for aid, and remain upon the watch, had originated in a little stroke of strategy which was not ill-conceived considering that it sprang from the brain of a young lady.

That there was some one in the wood above them Miss Falkland was quite convinced, and to ascertain who it was she knew was a great object at the time being. It had instantly struck her, therefore, that, by dividing their forces, her mother taking up a position on the little mound, whence she could see along the whole of the high road, and down a considerable portion of the little lane under the wall, while she, Isadore, placed herself on the point which commanded a view of two other sides of the promontory, no one could well escape from the wood without coming under the eyes of one or the other of the fair watchers. She did forget, it is true, that, supposing the fugitive to be a man, and that man not her cousin, Edward de Vaux, neither herself nor her mother were the least capable of making him stay, and that their hunt might very likely end, while the boy was absent, like a famous hunt of yore in the catching a Tartar. A vague sort of consciousness, it is true, that such might be the case, impressed itself upon her mind as she climbed to the little point above the river; but still her first question was directed to ascertain whether their line of watch was, as she hoped, secure and complete.

She repeated her inquiry then, in a louder tone, and Mrs. Falkland replied, 'Oh, yes, I can see to the river on the other side. But, indeed, Isadore, it is growing very dark. I can scarcely distinguish the house.'

Isadore still lingered, however; for the spot where she stood, looking eastward, caught more light than the rest of the scene. She thought she heard a slight rustling sound, too, above her, as of some one creeping through the bushes; and it must be confessed that her heart beat violently. Although, in truth, she now began to think her scheme a little rash, yet curiosity and anxiety for her cousin's fate still kept her where she stood. The next moment, however, she saw some one, indistinctly, pass through the bushes on the edge of the higher part of the bank, and imagination did much to persuade her that she recognised the figure.

'Oh, mamma,' she exclaimed, 'I see him—I see him!' but the figure was instantly lost behind some more trees. It was evidently still passing on to the eastward, as if to escape in that direction, for the branches rustled as it forced its way through; and Isadore took two steps back to catch another sight of it as it passed before a bare facing of rock, at the extreme point. At that moment there was a sudden rush through the brushwood; and ere Isadore could see that it was nothing more than a fragment of rock given way under the foot of the person above, she started back, thinking that it was he himself springing down upon her, lost her footing on the edge of the bank, and, with a shrill scream, fell over into the river.

Mrs. Falkland shrieked also, and rushed forward to the stream, but the height from which Isadore had fallen had caused her instantly to sink, and nothing was to be seen by the mother's eye but the clear glistening expanse of the water, with the reflection of the cliffs, and trees, and banks, and of the fading purple of the sky, broken by a thousand rippling circles, where her child had disappeared. With the loud, piercing, thrilling cry of maternal agony, she shrieked again and again; and as she did so, springing from rock to rock, with the swiftness and certainty of a wild goat, appeared the figure which Isadore had seen above her. He stood for a single moment on the spot whence she had fallen, and then exclaimed to Mrs. Falkland, below, 'Where is she, woman? where is she?'

'There, there!' cried Mrs. Falkland, pointing to the spot; but as she spoke a bit of white drapery floated up to the top of the water, a little farther down the stream. Pharold paused no longer, but leaped from the bank—sank—rose again—and in the next moment, with his left arm round the slender waist of Isadore Falkland, and her head thrown back upon his shoulder, he struck with his right towards the margin, where the soft, meadowy sloping of the park afforded an easy landing-place. There, springing on shore, he laid his fair burden on the grass, but she was pale, and moved not; and Mrs. Falkland, gazing with agony on the colourless countenance of her daughter, wrung her hands, exclaiming, 'Isadore! Isadore! she is dead! oh, she is dead!'

'No, lady,' said Pharold, kneeling down, and looking intently upon the fair face before him, —'no, lady! she is not dead, nor has the water had any effect on her. That is not the face of a drowned person. She must have fainted through fear, and will soon recover.'

'For God's sake, then, help me, sir, to bear her to the house,' cried Mrs. Falkland; 'do not, do not hesitate. You who have rendered us such infinite service, do not pause there, but make it complete by bringing her to a place where she may be recalled to life.'

'What!' cried the gipsy, 'to be taken and thrust into a prison! Do you not know that they are pursuing me on a charge of murder—pursuing me as if I were a wolf? Have you not, yourself, been sending out men to take the murderer Pharold?'

Mrs. Falkland had forgot all other fears in her fears for her daughter; but as Pharold suddenly recalled them, she involuntarily drew a step back, and gazed on him with terror; but it required scarcely the thought of an instant to make her remember that he had saved the life—at least she trusted so—of her only child; that he had risked his own existence to rescue a perfect stranger, and she exclaimed, boldly,

'No, no! I will never believe it! You are not—you cannot be guilty. But we waste time—we waste the moments that may save my child. For pity's sake, for God's sake, aid me to carry her home. I have sent, but I see no one coming—they may be long—she may be lost ere they arrive. If you will come,' she added, seeing the gipsy still hesitate, 'I promise you that you shall go free, and well rewarded—you shall be as safe as if you were in your own house.'

'House!' exclaimed the gipsy; 'I have no house! but I will believe you, lady—I will trust you;' and taking Isadore once more in his arms, he strode rapidly and powerfully forward, followed at the same quick pace by Mrs. Falkland.

He took not the way across the green, however, believing that he might there be met by the servants, and his retreat cut off; but passing through the low shrubberies, which were almost as near, he walked on towards the house in silence. Every moment the light was becoming less and less, but he threaded the walks as if he had known them from boyhood, and took all the shortest cuts to abridge the way. At length, however, he paused for an instant, and turning to Mrs. Falkland, he said, in a low voice, 'She revives! I feel her breath upon my face!'

'Thank God! thank God!' replied her mother, in the same low tone; and the gipsy then abruptly added, as he resumed his way, 'You believe me innocent, then.'

'I do, indeed,' answered Mrs. Falkland; 'I cannot believe a person guilty of a cool, deliberate murder, who could so boldly and generously risk his own life to save that of a fellow-creature,—it is not in human nature.'

'It is not, indeed,' replied Pharold, still striding on; 'but why, then, did you send out men to hunt me as you would a wolf?'

'I sent them not out,' she answered; 'but when they went, I, too, thought that you might be guilty.'

'The memory of your brother,' said Pharold, 'the memory of him who loved me, and whom I loved as I have never loved any other man, should have made you think differently. Was he a man to love one whose nature led him to deeds of blood?'

'He was not, indeed,' answered Mrs. Falkland; 'but they charge you with his death, too.'

'Ha!' cried Pharold, in a tone of unfeigned astonishment; 'ha! that, then, is the well prepared, long digested lie, is it? That they should accuse me of the gamekeeper's death I thought natural—though I would have given a limb to save him. That they suspected me of Edward de Vaux's, I heard without surprise; for men are always the fools of circumstances, and there were circumstances against me; but that, after twenty years, they should accuse me of the death of him that I loved more than any other thing but liberty, I did not think that villany and impudence could bring about; and did you believe that, too?'

'No,' replied Mrs. Falkland, very willing, by speaking the exact truth, to soothe the irritated mind of a man who had just rendered her so inestimable a service,—'no, I did not believe it; and as soon as the charge was made in my hearing, I expressed my disbelief of it entirely.'

'So, so!' said the gipsy,—'there is some justice left! Lady, when you were four years old, I have carried you in these arms, as I now carry your daughter; and I thank you at this late hour for doing justice to one who was loved by those who loved you. No, no, I am not a murderer; and never believe it, whatever they may say.'

They were now coming near the house; and Mrs. Falkland, with fears for Isadore somewhat relieved, would fain have asked the fate of her nephew; but at that moment the gipsy spoke again: and though from the shadow cast by the trees of the shrubbery she could not see in which way his eyes were directed, the tone of his voice, as well as the words themselves, showed her that he was addressing her daughter. 'Be not afraid, lady, be not afraid,' he said; 'you are quite safe, though in hands that you know not, your mother is behind;—lean your head on my shoulder, and keep quite still.'

'Are you there, mamma?' said a faint voice, that went thrilling through all the innermost windings of Mrs. Falkland's heart.

'Yes, my beloved Isadore; yes, my dearest child,' replied the mother; 'I am here, close beside you; and, thank God, you are quite safe.'

'Hush!' said the gipsy; 'hush—if I am seen I am lost, remember; and keep silence, if you feel that I have served you.'

'Inestimably,' replied Mrs. Falkland, in a low tone; and the gipsy, now emerging from the shrubbery, crossed a part of the lawn that lay between the angle of the wood and the house.

In the grey of the evening a party of two or three persons might now be seen, though indistinctly, following the open path, about half way across the park towards the cliff. But though he turned his eyes in that direction, the gipsy took no farther notice of them; and, approaching the house, directed his course towards a glass door which led out from a small breakfast parlour upon the lawn. Mrs. Falkland took a step or two forward, and opened the door, and Pharold carried Isadore up the steps into the room, and placed her in safety upon a sofa.

Her first action was to hold out her arms to her mother, with all that flood of gratitude, and tenderness, and joy flowing from her heart, which we feel on being restored to 'this pleasing, anxious being,' after having thought that we were quitting for ever the warm precincts of the cheerful day. Mrs. Falkland caught her to her bosom, and locked in each other's arms, they wept as if they had lost a friend.

Well may philosophers say that man never knows what joy is till he has tasted sorrow. Isadore and her mother had loved each other through life, without one of those petty rivalries, either for authority or admiration, without one

of those jarrings of different purposes and opposing wishes, which sometimes sap the affection of child and parent. They had loved each other through life dearly, and they knew it; but they did not know how dearly, till fate had nearly placed the barrier of the grave between them, and Isadore, safe and rescued, held her mother, weeping, in her arms. Who can explain such tears? Who can tell why the same drops which flow from pain or sorrow should be companions of the brightest joy?

However, they wept, and wept in silence; for both felt the bosom too full for speech, and both, from the still oratory of the heart, offered up thanks to God for the joy and relief of that moment. Nor was their happiness unfelt by him to whom, under the Almighty, it was owing. The gipsy stood and gazed upon them, with his arms crossed upon his chest, and the light of internal satisfaction glistening in his eye. There was something in the scene before him, and in those who were the actors therein, which connected itself with the long, long past; which woke up the memories of many a year, and which called up a thousand thrilling sensations that long had slept. While one might count a hundred, perhaps, he paused, and gazed upon Mrs. Falkland and her daughter, giving way to the purest feelings of human affection, and suffered his thoughts to wander wildly over the years gone by; but then, starting from his reverie, he remembered that he must depart.

'Lady, I go,' he said. 'May God bless you and yours, and send you ever, at your moment of need, one as willing and as able to help you as the gipsy has shown himself.'

'Stay, stay one moment,' said Mrs. Falkland. 'You must not, indeed, leave my house unrewarded for the infinite service you have rendered me.'

'I am rewarded already, lady,' he said; 'I am rewarded by what I have seen, I am rewarded by what I have felt, I am rewarded by knowing that there is one at least that can do justice, in her own heart, even to a gipsy. Lady, I must go—my stay is dangerous—fare you well.'

At that moment, however, there was a powerful hand laid upon his shoulder, and as he turned quickly round, he found himself faced by Colonel Manners, who still kept his hold of the gipsy's collar and shoulder, notwithstanding the sudden jerk he gave himself.

'You are my prisoner,' said Manners, sternly. 'Surrender at once, for resistance is vain.'

'Doubtless,' answered the gipsy, bitterly. 'I have fallen into the trap; and it is useless to writhe. Oh, God of heaven! how often have I sworn never again to do a service to any of these human worms; for if not punished by their own base ingratitude, some other evil is sure to follow, as if thou hadst sworn vengeance on every one that did an act of kindness to their outcast race!'

'You shall not suffer, however, for your service to me,' said Mrs. Falkland, advancing. 'I have pledged you my word, and I will redeem it.—Colonel Manners,' she continued, 'listen to me for one moment: this man has, within this quarter of an hour, saved my daughter's life, at the risk of his own.'

'Indeed,' cried Colonel Manners. 'May I ask how? I trust Miss Falkland is not hurt.'

'No, not at all, I believe,' replied Mrs. Falkland. 'She fell from the bank into the stream—sunk before my eyes, Colonel Manners; and had it not been for his instant aid, she would have been now no more.'

'I am most delighted, indeed, to hear of her escape,' replied Manners, 'and would to God it had been my fate to render her the assistance instead of this person, for I should then have avoided a most painful duty. But, indeed, my dear madam, as it is——'

'Nay, say not a word more, Colonel Manners,' interrupted Mrs. Falkland, 'but hear my story out. He saved my daughter from the stream—he swam with her to land—but she was without sense or motion—I had nobody with me to help me, and I besought him, for the sake of Heaven, to do what my strength was, of course, not sufficient to perform, and to bear her home. He then told me his name—informed me that people were hunting him like a wolf among the woods; and asked if I could expect him to venture into the very midst of his enemies. I plighted my word for his safety—I promised him by everything sacred that he should meet no impediment in quitting my dwelling, and upon that promise alone he came.'

'I am sorry, my dear madam,' answered Manners, calmly but gravely, 'that such a promise can only be binding upon yourself. Did it involve merely an act of politeness, of friendship, or of personal sacrifice, I would do anything in my power to oblige you: but there is a higher duty calls upon me than either courtesy or friendship; and I must obey its voice. I have a duty to perform towards the laws of my country—I have a duty to my dead friend; and, at any risk and all risks, I must and will obey it. I wish, with all my heart, that I had met this man anywhere but here; but wherever I meet him, I am not only empowered, but bound, by every principle of law and justice, to arrest him.'

'Is there either law or justice, then, in arresting an innocent man?' demanded the stern voice of the gipsy.

'Of your innocence or guilt the law has still to decide,' replied Manners. 'An accusation of the gravest kind has been made against you, circumstances of strong suspicion have already been discovered to justify the charge. If you be guilty, it is but fit you should be punished; and if you be innocent, doubt not that you shall have equal justice.'

'I did not expect this from you, Colonel Manners,' said Mrs. Falkland, bitterly. 'Have you no regard, sir, to my plighted word? Have you no consideration for my honour? I have used entreaties, sir; but I now insist that he

shall go; and, if necessary, I will call my servants and make them set him free. He has saved my daughter's life, Colonel Manners: he has come hither in my service, at my prayer, and upon my promise of safety; and if he had killed my brother, he shall go hence unimpeded.'

'Madame, I believe you risk that supposition without a suspicion that it may be true,' answered Manners. 'But I must now inform you, that one of the principal charges against this man is the very fact of having murdered your late brother.'

'And the charge is false, Colonel Manners,' answered Mrs. Falkland, vehemently. 'Whatever he may be now,—whatever he may have become since,—he was not then a man to shed blood, much less the blood of his friend and benefactor. He could have no motive but lucre, and that motive was wanting; for from my brother he might have had whatever sums he required. Nay more, I have often heard my brother declare, that he would not take what he offered. But, as I have said, Colonel Manners, all other considerations apart, my word is pledged, and he *shall* go free.'

'Noble heart! noble heart!' cried the gipsy. 'On my hands rests not one drop of innocent blood, as there is a God above the stars! Neither do I fear death nor dread inquiry; but my liberty is more than my life, and what should I do, for months, a prisoner amongst stone walls and the vermin of the earth! He talks boldly of arresting me now, when he has got me here with dozens at his back; but let him take me five hundred yards hence, where I was ere I carried your daughter hither,—let him take me to the wood, or the bare hill side, where there are no odds against me,—and then, strong as he thinks himself, let him arrest me if he can.'

Mrs. Falkland was going to speak again, and might, perhaps, have spoken angrily, for she was less calm than usual; but at that moment Isadore's voice made itself heard, though but faintly. 'Colonel Manners,' she said, 'Colonel Manners, speak with me for a moment.'

Manners looked towards her as she lay on the sofa at the other side of the room: and he felt that to hear what she had to say distinctly he must, by going nearer, release the gipsy from the grasp which he still continued to maintain upon his collar. He felt also, what perhaps Isadore had at her heart felt, too, that her voice was likely to have more effect with him than that of any one else; and as Manners had a strong inclination to do his duty rigidly, he somewhat feared her persuasions. However, he could not, of course, refuse to comply; but to guard against his prisoner's escape, he instantly locked both the doors of the little breakfast-room ere he approached her. He then—seeing the gipsy stand calmly with his folded arms, as if prepared to wait his decision—drew near, and bending down his head, 'I am most happy, indeed,' he said, 'that you have not suffered any injury.'

'And yet you would ruin the person who saved me,' said Isadore; 'but do not reason with me, Colonel Manners, for I have neither strength nor wit to contend with you. I want to persuade, not to convince, you.'

'That is what I am most afraid of,' answered Manners with a smile.

'Do not be afraid,' said Isadore, 'but listen. Do you think, Colonel Manners, that a man who could murder Edward de Vaux would risk his own life to save Edward's cousin?'

'It is strange, certainly,' answered Manners, 'but——'

'Do you think then,' continued Isadore, interrupting him, 'that a man who felt himself guilty of murder would go voluntarily to the midst of the friends and relations of the person he had killed, solely for the purpose of carrying home a poor girl that he had just saved from drowning? Your murderers, Colonel Manners, must be curious characters.'

Could Isadore have beheld the face of her hearer distinctly, she would have seen that his cheek glowed a little with something like shame; but he answered, 'I did not say, my dear Miss Falkland, that I thought him guilty. I only said, that the law required me to keep him a prisoner till he had proved his innocence.'

'Well, then, Colonel Manners,' rejoined Isadore, 'since you do not think him guilty—and I know you do not—since there is every reason to think him innocent—since mamma has plighted her word—since he has saved my life—since he came hither solely to aid me—you must let him go, indeed you must.'

Manners hesitated, and looked doubtfully at the gipsy, as he stood, dark and shadowy, with his arms still crossed upon his bosom, and his eyes bent upon the ground. Isadore saw that a word more would conquer; and though her heart fluttered and her voice trembled to think how important that word might, perhaps, become, at some future time, she made up her mind and spoke it, though in so low a tone that it fell on no other ear but his for whom it was intended. 'Colonel Manners,' she said, 'you must let him go, indeed you must,—' the words she added were, 'for my sake!'

Manners was embarrassed in every way. Who shall say what he would or what he would not have done 'for the sake' of Isadore Falkland? but that was not all—had he really believed the gipsy guilty, he would have had no hesitation; but he did not believe him guilty. The manner in which Mrs. Falkland repelled the idea of his being the murderer of her brother was enough to make Colonel Manners entertain many doubts on a subject where his convictions had never been very strong; and the fact of the gipsy having saved Isadore's life at the risk of his own, and carried her home at the risk of arrest, were so irreconcilable with his guilt, that Manners began to doubt, too, in regard to the murder of De Vaux. He knew, undoubtedly, that he himself

was not the person called upon to judge: but still, of course, his conviction of Pharold's guilt or innocence made a great difference in the degree of eagerness with which he sought to apprehend him.

But there were still several other motives for hesitation, when once he began to doubt. He felt that Mrs. Falkland was perfectly right in asserting, in every way, the inviolability of the promise she had made to the gipsy—he felt that the gipsy had a right to expect that it would be kept. He knew, also, that if Mrs. Falkland chose to call her servants, and order the liberation of the gipsy, in all probability any attempt to detain him would be in vain; and he was conscious, too, that in making the attempt, he was acting, at least, a very ungracious part. Still, none of these motives, singly, would have restrained him, had he not felt the strongest doubts of the gipsy's guilt; but when a great many different motives enter into a conspiracy together, to change a man's opinion, they are like smiths engaged in forging a piece of red-hot iron,—one gives it a stroke with his sledge hammer, and another gives it a stroke, till, hard as it may be, it is moulded to their will. Manners, however,—although he might be led by many considerations to temper the stern rigidity of duty,—was not a man to abandon it altogether; and, therefore, he sought a mean which, as it was only at his personal risk, he thought himself justified in following, in order that Mrs. Falkland's promise might be held inviolate, and, perhaps, that Isadore might be obeyed.

'Well!' he said, after a moment's consideration. 'All this business has happened most unfortunately, that I should meet a man here whom I am bound to apprehend, and who yet is guarded by a promise of safety. However, Mrs. Falkland, although I cannot abandon my own duty, yet I must do what I can to reconcile it with the engagement under which this person came here. I think you said,' he added, turning to Pharold, 'that if I would take you to the wood, or the bare hill side, with no odds against you, I might arrest you if I could—did you not?'

'I did,' said Pharold, 'and I repeat it.'

'Then we are agreed,' said Colonel Manners. 'I will do so, although I am fatigued and exhausted.'

'Who has a right to be the most fatigued?' cried the gipsy. 'Have I not been hunted since the morning from wood to wood? Have I not had to double and to turn like a hare before the hounds? Have I not twice swam that quick stream? Have I had that repose of mind or body, that you should talk of fatigue?'

'Well, well,' said Manners; 'all this matters little. I accept the proposal which you have yourself made; and I thus specify the terms. Though accompanied by me, you shall go free from this place in any direction that you please for one quarter of an hour; a space of time fully sufficient to put you out of all danger of being overpowered by numbers. At the end of that time you are my prisoner.'

'If you can make me so,' cried the gipsy.

'Agreed,' replied Manners: 'that is what I mean, of course; otherwise our agreement would be of no use.'

'Colonel Manners,' exclaimed Isadore, calling him back to her, for, in speaking, he had advanced a little towards the gipsy and Mrs. Falkland, 'for God's sake do not go. You do not know what may happen. Indeed, indeed, it is risking a valuable life most rashly. Let me persuade you not to go.'

She made Colonel Manners's heart beat more rapidly than ever it had done in his life; for to a man who felt as he did, and who had nourished the fancies that he had, to hear the voice of beauty, and worth, and gentleness, pleading to him for his own safety, was something much more agitating than the roar of artillery, or the rush of charging squadrons. Isadore spoke, too, in a voice low, from an effort not to appear too much interested, and a little faint too, perhaps, from late agitation and exhaustion; so that there was, in fact, a great deal more of tenderness in her tone than she at all wished or intended.

'Nay, nay, Miss Falkland,' answered Manners, who, in this instance, though gratified, could resist,—'I have yielded as much as I can, indeed. I must either arrest this man here, or, out of respect to your mother's promise and to your entreaties, must let him depart to a spot where we may stand man to man, and then do my best to apprehend him there.'

'Oh, let him go altogether, Colonel Manners,' said Mrs. Falkland: 'the one charge made against him is false, depend upon it; and in regard to poor Edward de Vaux, surely his conduct in saving Isadore may be taken as a proof that he is innocent there also. Why should you risk your life in a struggle where you know not how many may come against you?'

'Lady, you do me justice and injustice in the same breath,' said the gipsy; 'not one hand should be added to mine against his, if the whole world were inclined to assist the gipsy, instead of to oppress him. But, at the same time, I tell him, as I have told you, that not a drop of innocent blood is upon this hand; that it is as pure as his own, and that I am more truly guiltless than those who boast their innocence, and sit in high places.'

'I think,' said Manners, turning to Mrs. Falkland, 'that we must here end all discussion, my dear madam. My mind is perfectly made up as to what it is my duty to do. The risk, in this instance, is merely personal; and from such I will never shrink; and I feel very sure, also, that there is no chance of failure.'

'Be not too sure,' said the gipsy.

'But, Colonel Manners,' urged Isadore, 'if this person will give us what information he possesses—if he will tell what has become of Edward—if he will explain all, in short, will

it not be better to gain those tidings, and let him go quietly, than to hazard so much on a chance which may be productive of no results?'

'But will he make such a confession?' said Manners; 'will he give such information?'

The gipsy was silent; but Mrs. Falkland anticipated his answer. 'Doubtless he will,' she said, 'if you will undertake to let him go free when he has done.'

'Solely, if he can prove that Edward de Vaux is alive,' answered Manners. 'Words, my dear lady, can be of no use—I must have proof before I let him depart. He must not alone tell me what has become of my poor friend, but he must convince me that what he has told is true; otherwise I part not from him.'

'I know not well,' replied the gipsy, 'whether I have even a right to tell what I know; and how can I prove it without remaining in your hands, and under the curse of a roof where I can scarcely breathe, till those come who would thrust me into a prison; one month of which were worse than a thousand deaths? No, no! I neither will speak to be disbelieved, nor stay to be tortured, if I can win liberty by facing, singly, a thing of clay like myself. If you will keep your word with me, keep it now. If you would not play me false, throw open your door, and go out with me to a place where you shall see whether, with God's free air blowing on my cheek, and God's pure sky above my head, any single arm on earth can stay me, if I will to go.' As he spoke, however, two or three dim indistinct forms passed across the windows, which still admitted the faint, lingering twilight of an autumn evening, and the gipsy, dropping his arms by his side, listened for a moment attentively. 'It is too late,' he exclaimed, at length. 'It is too late. You have kept me till the bloodhounds have come back; and you shall have the joy of seeing them worry their quarry before you.'

'What is it you mean?' cried Manners. 'Of what bloodhounds do you speak?'

'He means what, I am afraid, is too true, Colonel Manners,' said Mrs. Falkland, in a tone of bitter disappointment; 'that Mr. Arden and the people sent to search the wood have just returned; and that, therefore, notwithstanding my word and your proposal, his apprehension in my house is the recompense he will receive for saving my daughter's life.'

'Do not be afraid, my dear madam,' said Manners, 'I will find means to keep my word with him; but let us be sure that it is as you suppose, before we risk going out into the park. I think I hear sounds in the hall also.'

Every one was silent; and the noise of distant footsteps and voices speaking was heard from the side of the hall and vestibule; and in a moment after some persons approached the very room in which Manners and the rest were standing.

The steps passed on, however, to the library; and at the door thereof paused immediately after, while the voice of the old butler said, 'She is not there, sir;' and the feet returned. They then heard the door of the music-room, which lay on the opposite side, open; and the butler again said, 'Nor there.' The next moment a hand was laid upon the lock of the very door near which they were standing, and Manners held his finger to his lips in sign of silence. The old man made one or two ineffectual attempts to turn the lock, and then repeated, 'Nor there either; for the door is locked for the night—though it is very odd the housemaid should take upon herself to lock up the rooms when I am out. I am sure I cannot tell where my mistress is, sir, nor Miss Falkland either, unless they have both been spirited away, like poor Mr. Edward; for they certainly are not up stairs in either of the drawing-rooms, nor at the place where the boy told me he left them. But now I think of it, I should not wonder if they were in poor Miss Marian's room; and if you will walk up into the drawing-room, sir, I will send to see.'

'Do, do,' said the voice of Mr. Arden; 'but it is very strange that they should have left the spot so suddenly, when they sent for you to come to them. Why did you not search the wood directly? It is not bigger than my hand.'

'Oh, sir, I set the boy and the two others we had called to help us to search,' replied the butler: 'but I came back again, because it was not my place to search woods, sir; and, besides, I had a presentiment that your honour would be here.'

'The devil you had,' said Mr. Arden; but what the worthy magistrate further replied was lost as he followed the butler up the stairs towards the drawing-room.

'Now, my dear madam,' said Manners, in a low voice, 'let me advise you instantly to join Mr. Arden, and to keep him engaged till I can effect my retreat, with our friend here; and you, my dear Miss Falkland, for God's sake do not forget yourself any longer: we have treated you very ill already, to keep you here so long in wet clothes. I am not very much accustomed to act as physician to ladies, but if I might advise, going to bed and warm negus would be my prescription.'

'Which I shall instantly follow, Colonel Manners,' said Isadore; 'but, for heaven's sake, take care of yourself too. Let us see you gone before we open the door.'

'No, no,' answered Manners; 'yours must be the first party to march off: I cannot move till I have reconnoitred the ground.' Thus saying, he turned the key and opened the door as silently as possible, and Mrs. Falkland and her daughter passed out into the corridor. Isadore paused for a single instant, as if she would have spoken either to Manners or the gipsy; but the former held up his finger, and gently closed the door that led from the breakfast-room into the interior of the house.

'Now, then,' he said in a whisper to the gipsy, 'let me see that all is safe;' and opening the glass door, he gazed forth over the lawns. The twilight lay heavy over the whole scene, and the dim indistinctness of the day's old age rendered it impossible to see any distant object. There was no one, however, in the immediate neighbourhood of the house; and Manners, looking back into the room, beckoned the gipsy forward, saying, 'Now, come with me.'

Pharold instantly complied; and Manners whispered, 'While we are in the park, you remain under my guidance and protection. As soon as we are safe out of it, you take the lead which way you will.'

The gipsy nodded, and Manners took his way by the shortest cut to the trees. Then taking a walk which led up by some steps and a small rustic door into the garden, he crossed over, till they were both between the fruit wall and a high holly hedge. Along this path he now walked rapidly, till they reached a spot half way between the house and the gate, through which with Isadore and Marian, and Edward de Vaux, he had once walked out into the woods. Here the gipsy halted for a moment, but then followed on without remark. The next instant, however, Manners heard in the bushes a noise of rustling which the gipsy had before distinguished; and ere he had taken two steps farther, a man stood before him in the walk.

'Are you the gardener?' said Manners, still advancing,

'Yes,' said the man. 'What if I be?'

'Why, then, go to the house,' said Manners; 'and if you find Mr. Arden, the magistrate, there, give him Colonel Manners's compliments, and tell him that if he will wait half an hour, I will be back with him, as I have matters of importance to speak to him about, but am obliged to go a little way with this good man, ere I can attend to anything else.'

'I beg your honour's pardon,' said the gardener; 'I did not know you in this dark walk. That made me speak so rough; but if your honour be going out by that ere door, it's locked. I have just been locking it.'

'Well, open it again then, gardener,' said Manners, 'and then make haste and give my message.'

'That I will, your honour,' answered the gardener, walking on towards the door. 'But did your honour say that this here man was along with you? He looks——'

'Never mind what he looks,' answered Manners, somewhat sternly. 'He has matters of importance to arrange with me, or he would not be here—so make haste and open the door.'

The man obeyed, and only demanded farther, whether he should leave the key. 'No,' said Manners; 'I will return by the other gate.—Now go out, my good friend; and lead the way to the place you spoke of.' Pharold proceeded through the open door; and Manners, bidding the gardener not forget his message, followed out into the road.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SINGULAR DUEL.

'This is a strange business!' thought Manners, as he followed the gipsy into the road. 'This is a strange business; and on my part not a very wise one, I believe. However, there seemed no other way to settle it; and having acted for the best, I must make the best of it; though, perhaps, I should have persisted in apprehending the fellow, where I had the means of doing so, at once.'

Such were the thoughts of the decided, energetic, acting Colonel Manners, who was known to the world at large as one of the most skilful and fortunate officers in his Majesty's service; but the other Colonel Manners—the feeling, generous-hearted, somewhat imaginative Colonel Manners, who was only known to himself, and a few very intimate friends, as a man both of the most gentlemanly mind and spirit, and of the most liberal and kindly disposition—had other thoughts.

He wished much, that, by any other means than those of violence, he could obtain such evidence of Pharold's innocence, or at least such powerful motives for believing him innocent, as might justify, in the severer eyes of understanding, that course which was prompted by feeling and kindness. He saw no means of doing so, however, unless from the man's own lips he could draw some explanation of the many suspicious circumstances which existed against him.

Manners followed, therefore, in silence, for some way, while the gipsy, with a quick step, took the path towards the hill. At the turn of the lane, both Manners and Pharold looked back towards the gate of the garden, to see whether curiosity might not have tempted the gardener to follow; but though the light of day had now almost entirely left the sky, yet the distance was so short that the garden wall and the closed door were plainly to be seen without any other object. A little farther on stood a cottage, with the warm fire and the single candle within flashing faintly, through the dim small window, on the little bit of white railing before the door. Manners paused, and looked at his watch by the light; and then following the gipsy, he said, in a low and unconcerned tone, 'There is an air of comfort even in an English cottage!'

His purpose was to begin a conversation by any means, trusting to chance for the rest; but the gipsy did not seem disposed to render it a long one. 'Holes for rats, and for mice, and for snakes, and for foxes!' he said; 'God's nobler sky for God's nobler creatures! that is the best covering!'

He spoke harshly, but still he did speak, which was all that Manners wanted; and he replied, 'Do you think, then, that God gave man talents, and skill, and power in many arts, without intending him to make use of them?'

'Not to build up molehills out of dust and ashes!' said the gipsy.

'But how is he to defend himself, then, against the storm and the tempest?' demanded Manners; 'against the midday heat of summer or the chill wintry wind?'

'He needs no defence!' answered the gipsy. 'Were he not the creature of luxury rather than of God, the changing seasons would be as beneficial to his body, as they are to those of the beasts of the field, and to the earth of which he and they are made. And as to storm and tempest, the searching blade of the blue lightning will strike him in the palace, as surely as on the bare hill or the barren moor; and the hurricane that passes by the wanderer on the plain, will cast down their painted rubbish on the heads of the dwellers in cities.'

Manners saw that the lines of their ideas set out from the same point in directions diametrically opposite, therefore he at once brought the conversation nearer to the real subject of his thoughts. 'We differ,' he said, 'and of course must differ, on every subject connected with the manners and habits of mankind; but there is one point on which I trust we shall not differ.'

'I know none,' said the gipsy, abruptly. 'What is it?'

'It is that the creatures of the same God,' Manners exclaimed, 'are bound to assist and comfort each other.'

'If such be your thoughts,' answered the gipsy, turning round upon him—'if such be your opinions, then, why do you seek to torture me? Or is it that you think a gipsy not a creature of the same God as yourself?'

'I seek not to torture you,' answered Manners. 'Were I to see any one torture you, my hand would be the first raised to defend you. Nothing that you see of me now—nothing that you saw of me when last we met—should make you suppose that I would torture you, even if I had the power.'

'I tell you,' answered the gipsy, sternly, 'that to live one day in the brightest saloon that the hands of folly ever decked for the abode of vice, would be torture to me! What, then, would be a prison?'

'Whatever your own feelings might make it,' answered Manners; 'my purpose in seeking to place you in one could only be to fulfil the laws of my country, and to bring the guilty to justice, but not to torture you. Nor in this can you accuse me of looking upon you not as a fellow-creature; for, of whatever race the offender had been, you know I would have done the same under any circumstances, though your peculiar feeling respecting liberty might, indeed, make me more scrupulous in arresting you than I should be in regard to a person of another race.'

'And have you been so scrupulous, then?' demanded the gipsy, bitterly. 'Have you examined so carefully whether you have any real right to suspect me of the charges brought against me? Have you inquired whether those appearances, on which the charges were grounded, might not be all false and futile? Have you asked and searched out diligently whether some of those men who witness against me have not hatred and fear of me at their hearts?'

'I am not the judge,' answered Manners, 'and a judge alone can make such inquiries.'

'Are you, then, a tipstaff, or a bailiff, or a turnkey?' demanded the gipsy, 'that you should pursue me as if the warrant were placed in your hands for execution.'

'I am neither of those persons you mention,' Manners replied; 'but every subject of this land is empowered and called upon to apprehend a person against whom a warrant on a charge of murder is known to have issued. But to return to what I was saying. In construing the power thus placed in my hands, I should always be more scrupulous to a person of your class—or nation, if you like the word better—because I know how galling the loss of liberty must be to one who spurns even the common restraints of cities; and could I have any positive proof that the warrant had issued against you on a false charge, I certainly should not attempt to execute it.'

'On what charge did it issue?' demanded the gipsy, turning for a moment to ask the question ere he again strode on.

'You are aware that there are many charges against you?' replied Manners; 'but the precise one to which you allude is, I believe, the having murdered my poor friend, Edward de Vaux.'

The gipsy laughed aloud. 'Were that all,' he said, 'it were soon disproved. His blood is not upon my hand.'

'Disprove it, then!' exclaimed Manners, who, from the whole tenour of the gipsy's conversation, felt more and more convinced of his companion's innocence at every step they took. 'Disprove it, then! Other charges have been brought since, but I know nothing of them, except that one of them, as far as I can judge, is certainly false. Therefore, if you can but show me that the blood of my poor friend De Vaux does not stain your hand, I will leave you directly to follow what course you please; but if you cannot do so, we are now upon the bare hillside, where there is none to aid either you or me; and you shall go no further if I can stop you.'

A man may be a very clever man, and not able to calculate all the curious turns of another's character; and it so unfortunately happened that Manners, after having led the gipsy very nearly to the point he wished, overthrew at once everything he had accomplished by the threat with which he concluded.

The gipsy took two steps forward, and then turning round, stood with Manners face to face. 'Colonel Manners,' he said, 'not one drop of your friend's blood stains my hand! I swear it by yon heaven and the God who made it. I could prove it, too; but I will not prove it for any man's threats. You say I shall not go if you can stop me! I am not bound yet, thank God, with cords or chains. I am not laid in one of your dungeons. I am not shut in with bolts and bars. I will not tell you what I know! I will not give you proof of any kind, and I bid you take me if you can.'

As he thus defied him, and announced his determination, Manners expected every moment to see Pharold turn to use the speed for which his limbs seemed formed, and although the gipsy was, as we have said, two paces in advance of him, he did not doubt that he should be able to seize him before he could effect his escape. The ground on which they were standing was a small flat space on the side of the hill, with the road, taking a steep ascent four or five paces beyond, and having a deep descent on one side, and a rapid acclivity on the other. Thus, if the gipsy attempted to fly along the road, Manners saw that he must necessarily turn to do so, and thus delay his flight; while if he took any other way, he must come within reach. To Colonel Manners's surprise, however, the gipsy did not move from his place, but remained with his arms folded in an attitude of determination, which very plainly spoke the resolution of bringing the affair to a personal struggle. Manners smiled as he perceived his intention, very confident that his superior muscular strength would at any time enable him to overpower two such antagonists.

'My good fellow,' he said, 'this is really very foolish; for even if you suppose yourself stronger than I am, I could disable you in a moment, if I thought fit, with my sword. As you seem determined to resist, however, I will make myself even with you in point of arms, and lay aside my sword, which I cannot draw upon an unarmed man; but it must be remembered——'

'Keep your sword, Colonel Manners!' said the gipsy, 'and draw it. I am not so much unarmed as I look;' and, as he spoke, he drew from beneath his long loose coat the weapon with which, as we have seen, he had provided himself in the morning.

Now there was not exactly, at that moment, what Sir Lucius O'Trigger calls very good small-sword light. The sun was down completely, and though the last grey gleam of parting daylight, that lingered still in the western extremity of the valley, and was reflected from the windings of the glassy stream, fell, with all the force it had left, upon the spot where Manners and his antagonist were standing, though two or three stars were early looking through the mottled clouds, and the coming moon threw some light before her; still his powers of vision must have been strong who could see, as clearly as is desirable, the playing of an adversary's point round his sword-blade. Manners, however, did not hesitate. He was becoming a little irritated at the tone of bitter, and, in some degree, scornful defiance which the gipsy assumed; and although it was not in his nature to be very much moved by anything of the kind, yet he went so far as to think, 'Well he shall soon find that a gipsy is not quite so all-accomplished a genius as he imagines. I have had a droll fate here, certainly, to be called out by my friend's father, and to fight a duel with a gipsy!'—'The consequences be upon your own head, my good friend!' he added aloud, bringing round the hilt of his sword, and drawing it from the scabbard. 'I do not wish to hurt you, but you force me to do so.'

'Be it on my head!' said Pharold; and their blades crossed.

There are two sorts of brave men: one which gets warm and impetuous in action and danger, and one which gets calm and cool. Manners was of the latter sort. Perhaps there never was upon the face of the earth a man whose heart applied to itself the idea of danger less than his; and, consequently, he acted as if he were a spectator, even where peril to himself was most imminent. In the present instance he soon found that he had much underrated the skill of his opponent, for if he had not a very *theoretical*, Pharold had at least a very *practical*, knowledge of the use of his weapon, and his singular agility and pliancy of muscle added many an advantage. Manners was sincerely sorry to find that such was the case; not that he imagined for a moment that all the gipsy's skill or activity would suffice to injure him, but he wished and designed to master his opponent without hurting him; and this he felt would be very difficult, if not impossible. He strove for it pertinaciously, however, for some time, and hazarded something himself in order to obtain that object. At length, however, he became weary of the contest, and saw that he must soon bring it to a termination somehow, although he still felt an invincible disinclination to risking such a lunge as might deprive his adversary of life. He determined, then, to play a game hazardous to himself, though merciful to his opponent; and, aided by his superior strength and height, he pressed the gipsy back against the hill as vehemently as he could. In his haste he barely parried a lunge, and the gipsy's sword went through the lappels of his coat. But the advantage was gained, and at once disarming his adversary, he closed with him, cast him to the ground, and set his knee upon his chest.

The contest in all had continued for some time; but the last struggle was over in a moment, and ere Pharold well knew what had occurred, he found himself upon the ground, with the sword of the British officer at his throat. He lay there, however, calm, still, stern, without making even one of those instinctive efforts to shield his bosom from the weapon, from

which a less determined spirit could not have refrained.

'Now!' cried Manners, —'now will you give me the explanation I seek?'

'Never!' answered the gipsy, in a low but firm voice—'never!'

Manners hesitated for a moment; but then, withdrawing his knee from the gipsy's breast, he returned his sword into the scabbard. 'I will try other means!' he thought, 'I will try extraordinary means with him, too, and perhaps I may gain more by it than by following the dictates of rigid duty to the letter.'

'Why will you not explain?' he added aloud. 'It would save both you and me from many a painful occurrence.'

'Because I will not be compelled to any act under the sun!' answered the gipsy, who had only taken advantage of the degree of freedom which he now possessed to raise himself upon his arm.

'Then you shall not be compelled,' answered Manners, to whom his answer had given the right key to his obduracy,—'then you shall not be compelled, but you shall be persuaded. Stand up, Pharold, and listen to me as to one who does not feel towards you as you would make yourself believe that all our race do towards yours. You have seen my conduct—you see it now; and you must judge of me better than you lately did.'

The gipsy hung his head. 'You have kept your word with me,' he answered. 'You have brought me to a place where no odds could be found against me, and you have vanquished with your own weapons at your own trade. What more?'

'I have spared you when I might have hurt you,' replied Manners; 'and now I let you go free when I might make you a prisoner——'

'You let me go free!' cried the gipsy, in a tone of astonishment;—you let me go free! and without conditions, too?'

'Without any conditions,' answered Manners, 'but such as your own heart shall lay upon you, when you have heard all that I have to say to you.'

'Then you, too, are one of the few noble hearts,' answered the gipsy, rising; 'and I have done you injustice.'

'There are more noble hearts in the world,' Manners rejoined, 'than you know of, my friend. But listen to me, and let me see if yours be a noble heart too. Edward de Vaux is, or was, my friend and my companion in arms. We have stood by each other in battle; we have attended each other in sickness; we have delivered each other in danger; and, had he been my brother, I could not have loved him better. I find that, the night before last, he left his home when all the family were at rest; that he went to visit one with whom he had no known acquaintance or business; and that he never returned to those he most loved. Was it not natural for me to search for him with all the rapidity in my power?'

'It was! it was!' answered the gipsy; 'and I have judged you harshly.'

'I did search for him,' continued Manners; 'and I found, by footmarks in the earth, that he had gone with the stranger whom he had visited, to a lonely quarry, and that from that spot his footsteps are not to be traced. This afforded some cause for suspicion and apprehension; but when the place where his steps disappeared was all stained and dabbled with blood, what was I to think?—what was I to do?'

'To think that he was murdered, and to pursue the murderer,' answered Pharold, boldly; 'and I have done you wrong; but the habit of suffering injustice and indignity from your race irritates ours into believing that you are always unjust; and, in this instance, the consciousness of my own innocence, too, hid from my eyes one half of the appearances against me.'

'You judge wisely, and you judge well.' answered Manners. 'There were strong appearances against you; and there were also many minor facts which swelled those appearances into proof so positive of my friend's death, and of your guilt, that I should have been unworthy of the name of his friend—unworthy of the name of a man—if I had not pursued you as I have done.'

'You would!' answered the gipsy.

'And yet, notwithstanding all this,' continued Manners, 'I tell you honestly that I believe you innocent. I may be foolish to do so—the prepossession may be false—the motives for such belief may be slight; but yet that belief is strong. With powerful evidence against you, I felt convinced of your innocence; and, with the power to take you, I let you go free.'

Manners paused for a moment, and the gipsy, with his hands clasped and his eyes bent upon the ground, remained silent, buried, apparently, in deep thought. 'Now,' continued Manners, after suffering him to revolve what he had said for a few moments; 'now, I have spoken to your understanding, and I have shown you that my conduct in pursuing you has been fully justifiable, and that I am not one of those unjust and ignorant fools, who entertain a base prejudice against the whole of your race, which but serves to drive them on to acts of reckless evil. I have treated you generously—I have not consulted even rigid duty; and leaving you free to act, I now speak to your heart.'

'Speak on, speak on;' said the gipsy. 'You speak language that I love to hear.'

'I have told you,' said Manners, 'how I esteem Edward de Vaux; I have told you how intimate have been the bonds that united us—how dear the friendship that we felt; judge then of my feelings now, as I stand before you, not knowing whether he be dead or alive, well or ill, murdered or in safety. But hear me further. There is every reason to believe him lost for ever; and in that belief, not only I, his friend, must remain—but all who loved him—all to whom he is bound by the dearest ties; and I leave you to conceive the agony of sus-

pense which they now endure. Mrs. Falkland —her daughter, whose life you have so lately saved—De Vaux's father, Lord Dewry——'

The gipsy started, clenched his white teeth, and shaking his hand furiously towards the sky, exclaimed, 'May the vengeance of God fall like a thunderbolt on his head, and wither his heart to ashes!'

'Well, well!' said Manners, seeing that he had struck a wrong cord, 'pass him by; for there are others more interested than he, than I, than any of us. There is a young lady, fair, and gentle, and delicate, beloved by all who know her, blessed by the poor and the afflicted, the ornament of her house, the delight of her friends; and, to her own immediate family, the cherished, the beloved relic of a noble, a generous, a feeling parent early snatched away —of a parent, whom I have heard that you yourself esteemed and loved—of the late Lord Dewry, I mean; for the lady I refer to is Miss de Vaux——'

'What of her? what of her?' demanded the gipsy eagerly: 'but I guess! I guess!'

'It is easy for you to imagine what she must feel,' said Manners. 'She has been, as probably you know, engaged to her cousin De Vaux for several years, and they have loved each other through life. Their affection has grown up with them from childhood, and has been strengthened by every tie, till at length their marriage, which was appointed to take place in a few weeks, was to have united them for ever. Judge, then—judge what must be her feelings now; but I will not attempt to tell you what those feelings are—I will only tell you in what situation she now is, and leave you to judge for yourself. This very evening, the medical man who is attending her, assured me, that the anxiety and apprehension which she has suffered on account of her cousin, have already seriously impaired her health; and that great fears, even for her life itself, are to be entertained, if this state of mental agony is not soon put an end to by certainty of some kind.'

'That alters the whole,' cried the gipsy. 'But let me think a moment—let me think!'

'Yes!' said Manners; 'think of it,—and think well!—think what must be the feelings of a young and affectionate heart, which, early deprived of the sweet relationships of parent and child, had fixed all its best and warmest affections upon one who well deserved its love. Think what must be the feelings of such a heart, when the object of all her thoughts and hopes is suddenly and strangely torn from her—when every trace of him is lost, but such as naturally and strongly lead the mind to conclude that death of a bloody and violent nature is the cause of his prolonged and extraordinary absence.'

'You need say no more,' said the gipsy. 'I will remove your fears upon easy conditions. I had not foreseen all this. Like a fool, I had not remembered that events, which seemed to me all simple and clear, because I was an actor them and saw them all, would produce such anxiety and fear to those who saw no more than the result; but I have been moved by many another feeling, and occupied by many another event. I have seen men bring ruin on their own heads and mine, by following their own wilful follies rather than my counsel and command; and I have seen a thoughtless and innocent boy entrapped into becoming the sacrifice for the guilty and the obstinate. I have been called upon to punish the offenders, and to endeavour to rescue the innocent; and I have been hunted through this livelong day like a wild beast; so that I may well have forgot that circumstances, very simple in themselves, might fill others that knew not all, with strange fears and suspicions: but besides that—besides that—I had other motives for not telling what I knew. Those motives are now shaken by stronger ones: and for the sake of Marian de Vaux, I will say what I would not have said for the sake of my own life; but it must be on certain conditions.'

'Name them,' said Manners; 'and if they be not very hard to fulfil, doubt not that I will undertake them.'

The gipsy paused and thought for several minutes, and he then replied, 'I will, as I have said, put you in the way of finding your friend, Edward de Vaux; and you will find him—if not well—at least in kindly hands. But now mark me. The person with whom he is, has lately come over from America with private views and purposes of his own, yet doubtful and unresolved whether he will proceed with them or not. Were his residence in England known to any one, it might force him either to execute the designs with which he came sooner than he intended, or perhaps prevent him from changing those designs, though other circumstances may render such a change necessary, or still farther—'

'In short,' said Manners, 'he is desirous of remaining concealed; and, as far as I know, has every right to do so, without my inquiring at all into his motives. But you forget, my good friend, that there is as little chance of my knowing this person of whom you speak, as of my betraying him if I did.'

'You are wrong,' said the gipsy; 'there is every chance of your knowing him; you have seen him I know, and esteem him I am sure; and what I have to require is this, if, by my means, you find Edward de Vaux, and recognise the person now kindly tending him, you shall not, upon any pretence, or to any person whatsoever, reveal his real name and character. You shall recognise him merely as the person that he chooses to call himself, and speak of him as none other.'

'Of course,' answered Manners; 'he shall keep the incognito, for anything that I may do to the contrary, as long and as strictly as he likes.'

'But, one thing more,' said the gipsy, 'one thing more; you shall, on no account whatever, lead, or give such information as may lead the father of Edward de Vaux to the place where his son is.'

'That is somewhat extraordinary,' said Manners; 'but I suppose, of course, that this person to whom you allude is Lord Dewry's enemy.'

'He was once his friend,' said the gipsy, 'and perhaps now that lord may speak of him as such, for there is no knowing by what terms his deep and crafty spirit may designate the people whom he most hates. Not a week ago he gave me gold, and would fain have made me think he loved me; but I knew him to the heart, and I saw the serpent in his eye.'

Whatever Manners might think of the evident hatred, strong and reciprocal, which existed between the peer and the singular person with whom he now stood, he did not judge it expedient to risk the advantages he had gained by defending Lord Dewry, especially as circumstances placed the power of dictating the conditions in the hands of the gipsy. 'My acquaintance with De Vaux's father,' he said, 'has been too short to acquire any knowledge of his real character.'

'It would require years, long years,' said the gipsy, 'to know his character as I know it—long, long years!—or one of those lightning flashes of nature that sometimes, whether men will or not, burst from the darkness in which they shroud themselves, and show at once the deep secrets of their spirits.'

'At all events,' said Manners, 'common humanity leads me to wish much to inform the unhappy father of his son's safety, and doubtless your conditions do not imply that I should refrain from such proceeding, as soon as I have, with my own eyes, seen my poor friend's condition.'

'In that respect, you shall be guided by him to whom I send you,' answered Pharold. 'It is sufficient for me to insure, that the confidence he has placed in me will be betrayed by no fault of mine—that compassion for a gentle and innocent girl does not lead me to risk defeating the plans of a man who trusts me. I know that when you have pledged your word, you will hold it sacred. Your actions have spoken for you! Will you accept the conditions?'

'I will!' answered Manners; 'and only beg of you to conclude the matter as fast as possible.'

'Well, then!' said the gipsy, pointing through the valley towards the line of the distant hills; 'you see yon moon, just raising her golden round behind the thin trees upon the upland. When she has risen ten palms' breadths upon the sky, you shall find me here again, and I will lead you to him you seek.'

'Nay, but,' said Manners, 'I thought you were about to conduct me thither now.'

'Doubt me not,' said the gipsy sternly, discovering at once that suspicions, slight indeed, but newly awakened by the proposed delay, were coming over the mind of his companion. 'By the God that I worship, by the heavens his handiwork, by the life he gave me, by the liberty I value more, I will not fail you. You have spared me, when you might have thrust me into a dungeon, and I would not deceive you even by a thought.'

'I believe you,' answered Manners; 'I believe you—only this, I am very anxious, ere I return to Morley House, to be enabled to give some account of him I seek, to be enabled, in short, to afford some comfort to Edward de Vaux's family. Can we not proceed then at once?'

'No!' answered the gipsy. 'I must think of my own race too! By the unhappy occurrences of last night, my people have been scattered, and have fled for concealment, while I remained to see whether I could find, or could deliver, the unfortunate prey, which those who laid the trap for us had found in the snare. My companions know not yet where I am; and I know not whether they are safe. Thus, ere I go farther, I must see what have been the events of this day, to those whom I am bound to protect and guide.'

'Be it so then,' answered Manners, 'but, at all events, you will allow me to give De Vaux's family the assurance that he is living, and is safe.'

'As far,' said the gipsy, 'as you dare to trust to my most solemn assurance, he is living, and safe also, if you mean by that word that he is free from restraint, and from any risk of injury; but that he is well, you must not say; for he is ill in body and sick at heart; and it may be long ere he is cured of either.'

'That is bad enough, indeed,' answered Manners; 'but it is so much better than the events, which we had reason to believe had occurred, that the bare fact of his being in a state of security will be an infinite relief to those who love him. I will trust to your word entirely; and both give the consolation which you have afforded, to those who will feel it most deeply, and be here at the time you name, though I am not very much accustomed to calculate hours by hands-breadths of the sky; and you must remember that, from Morley House, the moon is seen in a different position from that in which she appears here.'

The gipsy smiled, with a slight touch of contempt at Manners's inexpertness in a mode of calculating the time, which was to him familiar.

'Well, well,' he said; 'be here in just two hours, and you shall find me waiting you. In the meantime, rest at ease regarding your friend, and speak securely the words of hope and comfort to his family; and God be with you in your errand of peace. You have acted a noble part to-night, and there is one that blesses those who do so.'

Thus saying, he sprang down the bank to the spot where the sword, which Manners's superior skill and strength had wrenched from his grasp, was lying under a low bush. Pharold snatched it up, and was about to return it to the sheath: but some sudden thought seemed to cross his mind, and holding it up, he gazed upon it for a moment or two in silence. 'Accursed be thou!' he cried at length, in a bitter

tone. 'Accursed be thou, false friend and faithless servant! to leave thy master's hand at the moment of need!' and breaking the blade across his knee, he cast the fragments down the hill, and strode away, scarcely appearing to notice that Colonel Manners still stood gazing at his wild and vehement behaviour.

As Colonel Manners thought over all the circumstances that had occurred, while bending his way back once more to Morley House, he did not certainly find that his situation was, in every respect, a very pleasant one. He had to remember that the gipsy, Pharold, was charged with two other crimes, besides the assumed death of Edward de Vaux.

'I do not know the laws of the land,' he thought, with a half smile, 'quite well enough to be sure, whether they may not make me out an accessary after the fact, if ever this Pharold should be found guilty of slaying his benefactor; but, at all events, if the good gossiping world were to get hold of my having taken two or three moonlight walks with him, and having let him escape when I had the power to apprehend him, it would make a pretty story of it.' However, Colonel Manners was a man, who had too much confidence in his own motives, and too much reliance on what he called his good fortune, though others named it his good judgment, to care much what the world said. He took his way back to Morley House, therefore, tolerably satisfied with what he had done, thinking, 'I must now, however, try to soften down Mrs. Falkland's wrath and indignation at my persevering rudeness this evening; but, doubtless, the tidings I bring will prove no small propitiation.'

Having reached Morley House in safety, Manners's first inquiry was for Mr. Arden; but the old butler, with a look of solemn importance, informed him that the magistrate had been gone about half an hour, leaving a message, however, for Colonel Manners, to the effect that, having some other business of much importance awaiting his return, he could not have the honour of staying till Colonel Manners arrived, but would come back early the following morning.

'That will do quite as well,' answered Manners; and seeing that the cloud of self-importance upon the old man's brow had not as yet quite disgorged itself of its contents, he paused in order to hear what next; and the butler proceeded, 'Please, sir, Miss de Vaux, sent her maid down just now to say, that when you come back she wishes very much to see you herself, for she desires to speak with you.'

The man spoke in as mysterious a tone as if he were communicating a state secret; but Manners, who hated nothing on earth so much as mystery, answered, rather sharply, 'Well, as you see I have returned, you had better call Miss de Vaux's maid to take me to her mistress.'

'Oh, Miss Marian, sir, is in the little drawing-room,' replied the butler: 'she has been there these ten minutes, though Mrs. Falkland does not know it, because she is with Miss Isadore, who fell into the water, and wet her clothes, and had nearly been drowned, they do say, but——'

Manners waited for no farther information on subjects with which he was already acquainted; but, walking up stairs, proceeded to what was called the little drawing-room, and opened the door. Marian de Vaux was sitting on a sofa, with her fair rounded cheek, grown many a shade paler since Manners last saw it, leaning on her hand, and her arm again resting on the table. Her head was slightly bent, and the hand on which it leaned curved round at the wrist, with the fingers dropping languidly under her cheek; and with weary hopeless anxiety in every line.

She did not hear the door open; but Manners's first step in the room caught her attention, and she raised her eyes. 'Oh, Colonel Manners,' she said, as soon as she saw him, 'I am very glad you have come, for I very much wished to speak with you—but I am afraid you are fatigued, and perhaps may not have time to spare.'

'Not at all,' answered Manners with a smile, which he intended to prepare the way for better tidings. 'Indeed I think, Miss de Vaux, that if you had not sent me an invitation, I should have sent to petition one.'

'The fact is, Colonel Manners,' said Marian, 'I wish to know the truth. My dear aunt, and my cousin, with the very kindest intentions, keep the truth from me—at least so I am led to believe by what my maid has told me. Now, indeed, it would do me less harm, though they do not think so, to tell me the whole at once; and I am sure, Colonel Manners, that you will be kind enough to do so, when I assure you that I am far better able to bear even the worst tidings, than this terrible, awful state of suspense.

Manners took her hand, and gazed in her face with a smile full of kindness and hope, for he feared to make the change from grief to joy too sudden, by speaking the happier news he now had to bear; but even that was too much, and Marian's heart, as she read his smile aright, beat with fearful violence; and, pale as ashes with emotion, she sunk down again on the sofa, from which she had partially risen to speak to him.

'I see that your fortitude is not half real,' said Manners, seating himself near her; 'but let me entreat you to hear me calmly, my dear Miss De Vaux.'

'Oh, I will, I will indeed!' cried Marian. 'But for Heaven's sake speak, Colonel Manners—you smile; and I know you would not smile on one so wretched, if you had not some hope to give! Is it not so?'

'It is!' answered Manners: 'and delighted I am that now, for the very first time, I can give it. But, indeed, you must be calm, for the intelligence I have obtained is not so entirely good as to warrant our indulging in any very great joy, though it may do away our worst apprehensions.'

'That is enough! that is enough!' cried Marian. 'If they have not murdered him, I can bear almost anything else with fortitude: but, now, for Heaven's sake tell me all, for you see I can bear it with calmness and composure.'

'First, let me defend Mrs. Falkland and your cousin,' replied Manners, wishing, by a little delay, to give his fair hearer's mind time to habituate itself to a change of feeling; for neither her look, nor her manner, served at all to confirm the assurances of calmness and composure which she gave him. 'Let me defend Mrs. Falkland and your cousin; they really could give you no precise information, for till within the last half hour none has been obtained.'

'Oh, but they knew more than they let me know,' cried Marian, 'at least if my maid has told me true—but I trust it is not true—for I cannot believe that Edward can be safe, if she spoke correctly; she said you had found his footsteps, and blood, Colonel Manners, and the place where he must have fallen.' As she spoke, her countenance filled with horror at the ideas she recalled, and she clasped her hands over her eyes, as if to shut out some fearful sight.

Colonel Manners thought that the sooner such a lady's maid was discharged the better; but, as he could not contradict the story the woman had so imprudently told, he left it as it was, and replied, 'Do not, my dear young lady, call up such painful images, when I assure you that there is no foundation for the supposition that your cousin has suffered in the way our fears led us to imagine. My information, as yet, is scanty; and, till to-morrow, you must not ask me even how I have obtained it; but I have the most positive assurances that De Vaux is safe, though ill.'

'Thank God for his safety, at least,' cried Marian; 'but are you sure, Colonel Manners—are you quite sure? I do not wish to put any questions that you may not like to answer; but, only tell me if you yourself are quite sure of Edward's safety?'

'I am perfectly and thoroughly convinced,' answered Manners, 'that, whatever may have been the accident which may have prevented his return home, he is both in security, and attended with care and kindness. Indeed, my very telling you the fact should make you feel quite sure that my own conviction is firm; for, indeed, Miss De Vaux, no inducement would make me hold out a hope to you, were I not sure of that hope having a good foundation.'

'Thank you! thank you!' replied Marian; and, with one of those sudden bursts of tenderness, which sometimes overpower us when least we expect it, she gave way to a gushing flood of tears. 'You have not seen him then, Colonel Manners?' she said at length, wiping her eyes, and looking up with a glance, in which apprehension still contended a little against joy.

'Not yet,' Manners answered; 'but, I have received a solemn promise that I shall be conducted to the place where he is this very night.'

'Oh, let me go with you!' cried Marian, starting up.

'Nay, nay, I am afraid that would not do,' answered Manners, smiling. 'Think what the world would say, my dear Miss de Vaux, if you were to go wandering about, no one knows whither, through a long autumn night, with no other escort than a colonel of dragoons.'

Marian was won even to a smile, and, while it was yet playing round her lips, and sparkling in her eyes, Mrs. Falkland entered the room, not knowing by whom it was tenanted: 'Marian! Colonel Manners!' she exclaimed; 'and both laughing too! then some very happy change must have come over our affairs.'

'Oh, most happy, my dear aunt,' cried Marian. 'Colonel Manners—and I know not how to thank him—has discovered where Edward is, and that he is safe.'

'God be praised!' cried Mrs. Falkland; 'but let me hear all about it, for this is news indeed.'

'In the first place,' said Manners, willing, if possible, to escape any very close cross-examination till he could speak with more security on the many points of De Vaux's situation, which were still doubtful, 'in the first place, I have to apologise, my dear madam, for some want of courtesy to-night when last we met; but you must remember that I am but a rude soldier, and accustomed to think far more of what I consider my duty, than of what is polite; and I am sure that my good news will gain me your forgiveness.'

'If your perseverance have gained tidings of my poor nephew,' answered Mrs. Falkland, 'my forgiveness for much graver offences—could Colonel Manners commit them—would be but a poor recompense.'

'I hope Miss Falkland has not suffered at all,' continued Manners; but Mrs. Falkland exclaimed with a smile, 'Not at all, I trust! But, Colonel Manners, I will not be put off without an answer. You shall not keep all your good news for Marian, and refuse to let me share. What have you discovered?'

'Why, my dear madam,' answered Manners, 'I will tell you the candid truth. I have discovered very little beyond the bare fact, that De Vaux is in safety, though not well; and you must ask me no more questions till I can give you satisfactory answers. I am to be conducted to him, however, this very night: and, within an hour of this time. Miss de Vaux wished to go with me, and we were smiling to think what sort of story the world would make of her taking a midnight walk over the moors and through the woods, with the ugliest colonel of dragoons in his Majesty's service.'

'But, are you obliged to go alone?' asked Mrs. Falkland.

'I rather think that is part of my compact,' answered Manners; 'and I believe it must be on foot too.'

'And you were fatigued an hour ago,' replied Mrs. Falkland; 'and though I, selfishly, cannot make up my mind to ask you to put

your expedition till to-morrow, yet I must prevail on you to take some refreshment.' So saying, she rang the bell, and then went on, 'I need not ask who was your informant; and I feel equally certain that the tidings are true, because you give them credit, and because you derived them from him.'

'Now, I am in the dark,' said Marian, 'both in regard to this person you speak of, and to Isadore. What made you believe she had suffered from any accident, Colonel Manners, as you inquired of my aunt just now?'

'I am afraid that the whole story would be too long to tell you at this moment,' answered Manners, while a footman appeared, and Mrs. Falkland ordered some refreshments to be brought immediately, 'especially as you see I have to sup before I go—nor will I deny that I need my supper, for, to tell the truth, I have not dined. But Mrs. Falkland will relate our whole story of this evening, when I am gone; will tell you how your cousin escaped drowning by a miracle; and how Colonel Manners behaved in a very rude and uncivil manner: and how, at length, a compromise was entered into, which reflected more honour upon his obstinacy than upon his politeness.'

'No, no, Colonel Manners, I will not tell her such stories,' answered Mrs. Falkland. 'I will tell her, perhaps, that Colonel Manners's duty as an officer, and his feelings as a man, clashed with her aunt's duty as a person of her word, and her feelings as a woman; that her aunt did what she seldom does, lost her temper; and that Colonel Manners ended the matter wisely and well, and by his perseverance obtained joyful tidings without a breach of faith.'

'You are both speaking in mysteries to me,' said Marian rising; 'so I will go and make Isadore tell me the whole in less enigmatical language. Where is she, my dear aunt?'

'She is in bed,' answered Mrs. Falkland, 'but not likely to go to sleep.'

'In bed!' exclaimed Marian; 'then, indeed, it is time that I should go and see her, for I do not ever remember Isadore having been in bed at nine o'clock before, and something must be the matter.'

Thus saying, she quitted the room; and left Colonel Manners to take some refreshment, and to relate the while, to Mrs. Falkland, as much as he had time and inclination to tell of his adventure with the gipsy.

'I fear no danger,' he concluded, when he had ascertained by his watch that the time appointed for his return was approaching; 'I fear no danger, and have every confidence in the extraordinary man who is to be my guide; but, at the same time, it is always well to be prepared; and, therefore, I shall not only change these heavy riding boots for something more fit for walking, but I will take the liberty of adding a brace of pistols to back my sword in case of need.' He then took leave of Mrs. Falkland; and, after making the alteration he proposed, once more sallied out like the knight of La Mancha, with a heart scarcely less chivalrous, though guided by a mind which happily had power to restrain and direct the operation of his feelings. Here, however, the thread of his adventures must be broken off for a while, in order that we may leave no longer unfilled that void in his history which now exists between the moment at which we last left him in conversation with Lord Dewry, and that of his sudden re-appearance at Morley House.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TEMPTER.

At the end of the seventeenth chapter, it may be remembered, that we left Lord Dewry sitting in the saloon of Dewry Hall, with Colonel Manners. Night had become morning before the messengers for whom he waited arrived from Dimden; and when they did so, they brought the tidings that his lordship's well laid scheme had failed; that no one had been taken by the keepers, but a gipsy boy; and, that Sir Roger Millington, as well as one of the keepers, had been wounded—the first, seriously; the second, but slightly. Manners had expected and believed, that the peer would both be disappointed and shocked; but a variety of emotions naturally sprang from such tidings in the situation in which Lord Dewry had placed himself which could not be understood or calculated by any one unacquainted with all the dreary secrets of his heart. He was disappointed, it is true, that Pharold had not been taken; but he trusted, that, with all the means employed against him, the gipsy would not be able to escape.

Far from either shocked or sorry was he, however, that blood had been spilt in the affray between the keepers and the gipsies, or that death might ensue; for he saw that his grasp upon Pharold would thereby be strengthened, though he could have wished, certainly, that the shot which had been fired had found any other bosom than that of Sir Roger Millington, from whom much good service remained still to be derived. Such feelings, of course, produced some effect upon his behaviour, especially as Colonel Manners's cordial co-operation in his plans, without making him entirely forget the different principles upon which they acted, had, in some degree, thrown him off his guard, in regard to the minor points of demeanour. The effect, indeed, was not so striking as to lead Manners to suspect anything like the truth; but it was sufficiently marked to call his attention,—to appear strange and unpleasant,—and to make him think. 'This is one of those pampered sons of luxury, who only feel where their own immediate comforts are concerned. He seems to care no more for the people who have been wounded in his service than if they were things of wood.'

After a few short comments on the means to be next employed, Manners retired to the chamber prepared for him, and lay down to rest. He rose betimes, however: but it was long ere the peer made his appearance; for, exhausted with activity, and watching, and contending passions—the most wearing of all the many assailants of life and strength — he fell into a deeper slumber than he had known for many years. At length, he came, and at a late hour set out with Colonel Manners for Dimden; but since the preceding night a change had come over his feelings towards his companion. Then, in agitation and horror and anxiety, he had clung to any one for the sake of society; and more especially to one whose character and reputation gave him confidence, and whose warm co-operation afforded support. Now, however, he was going to hear from his agents the progress of dark and subtle plans of which Colonel Manners knew nothing, to examine and speak with persons whom he had engaged in proceedings equally cunning and unjustifiable; and he could very well have dispensed with the presence of one whose bold good sense was likely to search and see farther than might be at all convenient.

These feelings influenced his demeanour also; and although he could not be absolutely rude to a person he had so lately courted, and who was so perfectly independent of him in every respect, yet his manners were, throughout the journey, sufficiently cold and repulsive to make Manners determine to bring their companionship to a close as speedily as possible. On their arrival at Dimden the gipsy lad was sent for, and a few casual questions asked him by the peer, which he repelled by either obdurate silence or sullen monosyllables. This, however, was what Lord Dewry for the present desired; but Colonel Manners was resolved, if possible, to hear more, and he plied the prisoner with every question which he judged likely to elicit some information concerning his poor friend De Vaux. Little satisfactory news did he, indeed, obtain; and, in fact, received no reply to the greater part of his interrogation. Still the impression upon his mind, from one or two occasional words which the lad was induced to speak, was strong, that he at least was ignorant that De Vaux had been murdered, and thence arose in Manners's mind the first reasonable hope that his friend might still be living.

After the space of nearly an hour thus spent the youth was removed. The peer made no comment; but after looking out of the window called some of the servants, and inquired after Sir Roger Millington. The reply was, that the knight suffered considerable agony, and that the surgeon was with him still.

'Colonel Manners, you must excuse me for half an hour, while I visit my unfortunate friend,' said Lord Dewry, with a frigid bow. 'My poor son's death,' he added, while his quivering lip, at the very mention of his son's name, betrayed that on that subject, at least, his heart was painfully sensible,—'my poor son's death, of course, weighs heavily upon me; but I must not forget my wounded friend. I do not contemplate being detained longer than half an hour, and then I will have the honour of setting you down at Morley House as I drive home.'

'Do not hurry yourself, my lord,' answered Manners, calmly: 'I have some inquiries to make concerning my poor friend, and the means that have been taken to discover anything of his fate; and, therefore, as I sent my horse over to Morley House this morning, I will walk thither. I wish you good day.'

As it was not the peer's wish or intention to deprive himself altogether of Colonel Manners's influence and support in his farther measures against the gipsy—although he heartily desired his absence for the time—he changed his tone in some degree, and pressed Manners to stay; but took care, at the same time, to add such inducements as he knew were not very likely to have any weight with him, assuring him that the distance was fully five miles, and the road fatiguing and hilly.

Manners, however, as the peer expected, persisted in his design: and, taking leave, he walked out into the park, while Lord Dewry left the room, as if to proceed to the apartment of Sir Roger Millington. Before following him, however, it may be as well to say, that Manners did not direct his steps, in the first instance to Morley House; but thinking, 'His Lordship, in his concern for this Sir Roger Millington, seems entirely to have forgotten the poor keeper they talked of,' he stopped at the gate, and inquired whither the wounded man had been carried. The old woman at the lodge gave him the necessary direction; and proceeding to the cottage which she described, Manners entered with that sort of frank good feeling that stands on no ceremonies where the object is humane.

He found the wounded keeper still suffering considerably; and he found also, as he had been inclined to suspect, that the attention of the surgeon having been hitherto occupied by the patient of higher rank, the keeper had been entirely neglected. He was consequently more ill and feverish than the nature of his wound would otherwise have accounted for; and Manners knowing, from much experience in such occurrences, that if proper care were not taken, a slight injury might have a fatal termination, instantly despatched a messenger for the surgeon who was attending Miss de Vaux, and kindly waited his arrival.

In conversation with the keeper, he learned that Pharold had not been present when the guns were fired, and from him, also, he heard the particulars of the affray in Dimden Park, the wound the man had received not having been sufficiently severe to deprive him of the power of observing everything that occurred around him afterwards. By the whole of his narrative, the character of Pharold rose in Man-

ners's opinion, and his hopes of De Vaux's safety were strengthened: but still he determined to act as if such hopes did not exist; and accompanying the surgeon on his late return to the village near Morley House, he prepared to pursue the search for the gipsy as ardently as ever. What followed his arrival we have already seen.

In the meanwhile Lord Dewry proceeded through the long and somewhat dreary galleries of Dimden House to a distant apartment, but not to the chamber in which the participator in his dark schemes lay on a bed of agony and distress. The room he sought was solitary; and, ringing the bell, he ordered Harvey, the head keeper, to be sent to him. The man was already in the house, waiting his orders, and somewhat apprehensive of his Lord's displeasure at the failure of his plans. But as long as Pharold was alive and free, there was a demon of fear in the bosom of Lord Dewry that cowed the more violent passions of his nature in the presence of those whom he used as his tools. The consciousness of the designs in which he employed them made him treat them gently, from vague but anxious surmises that, notwithstanding all his care, they might suspect the motives of the plans they mingled with.

Although, then, in his heart, he could have felled the keeper to the earth for letting Pharold escape him, he addressed him mildly when he presented himself. 'Why, how is this, Harvey?' he said: 'you have let the game escape us. There must have been a fault somewhere.'

'The fault was in the cursed cowardice of the fellows that were with me, my lord,' replied the keeper: 'if they would but have followed me, we should have taken the black-faced villain any how. Two or three of us might have got wounded, but no matter for that; we should have had him safe here, if they would but have come on. But one fell back, and another fell back; so that when I had got them up against the wall, there were but two with me, and two could do nothing against a good dozen.'

'Let me hear how the whole business took place,' said the peer: 'remember that I have had no full account of it from any one; and we must try to remedy what has gone wrong.'

The park-keeper was, of course, glad enough to tell his story in the way that best suited him; and he related the events which we already know, according to his own particular version. The first error, he declared, was, that several of the men whom he had hired for the purpose of capturing the gipsies were too late at the rendezvous, and several did not come at all. These disappointments, and the delay they occasioned, had prevented his taking advantage of the moment when the gipsies' guns were discharged after the slaughter of the deer, and, as time lost is never regained, had caused the ultimate failure of his whole plan. He assured the peer, however, that Pharold had been one of the party engaged in the destruction of the game; and that he had been active in the affray wherein Sir Roger Millington and the keeper had been wounded. Some of the other men, he said, were not very clear about these facts, but he was ready to swear to it. He then related how the boy William had been seized by two of his party, who had been detached for that purpose; and he added a long account of the measures which he had taken in order to trace the gipsies in their flight.

'Is the keeper badly wounded?' demanded the peer, thoughtfully.

'He did not seem bad at first, my lord,' replied the man; 'but they say he is much worse this afternoon, and his wife is afraid he will die.'

The peer muttered something between his teeth, which might be, 'So much the better;' but this sound reached Harvey's ears but imperfectly, and Lord Dewry went on in a louder tone, 'Poor fellow! have you seen him, Harvey?'

'Not myself, my lord,' answered the keeper; 'but his wife came up to see if the doctor could go down, and I spoke with her for a minute.'

'Poor fellow!' said the peer; 'but we must take care that his murderer does not escape, Harvey. Have you thought of no way by which we can catch him?'

'Why, he is a keen hand, that Pharold, my lord,' replied the keeper; but I do think we can manage it, if your lordship likes to try.'

'Try!' said Lord Dewry: 'I will make him a rich and happy man, Harvey, who brings that villain to justice. But how do you think it can be managed?'

'Why I scarcely know as yet, my lord,' answered the keeper: 'I have had sure eyes upon some of the gipsy folks, and think I can make out whereabouts they have gone to; but Pharold knows better than to go with them. Besides, he was in the park there, not many hours ago, in the broad daylight.'

'Impudent villain!' cried the peer; 'but what in the name of Heaven could bring him there? Are you sure it was he?'

'I saw him with my own eyes, my lord,' replied the keeper; 'and had nearly caught him with my own hands; for we had him pinned in between seven and eight of us and the river: but without minding us more than if we had been rabbits, he took to the water like a hard run fox, and swam the river outright.'

Lord Dewry paused; for there was something in the daring hardihood of the gipsy congenial to the bold and fearless spirit which had animated himself in early years; and he felt a sort of stern admiration which even hatred could not quell. At length, however, he repeated, 'But what could bring him here? He could not be fool enough to come for the sole purpose of daring his pursuers.'

'No, no, my lord,' answered Harvey. 'He came after this boy that we caught, I dare say. The boy may be a bit of a relation, or, at all events, a friend; and they did not know what had become of him, for he was taken apart. Now, my lord, I was thinking—if might be so bold—that one might, perhaps, turn this boy to some account, and get him—do you see, my lord?'

The mind of the peer had been so long habituated to revolve dark and tortuous schemes, that it was apt and ready to comprehend the significant word, or half-spoken hint, which often forms the language of those who are afraid to give their purposes full utterance; and he answered, 'I do see, Harvey! That is to say, I see what you mean; but I do not see how it is to be managed. If the boy had any means of communicating with his own gang, he might, perhaps, lure the chief villain of the whole into our net; but we know not where they are, and he, in all probability, is still more ignorant.'

'I know well enough where a part of them are,' answered the keeper. 'Some went down towards the water, and I cannot trace them: but some, for a certainty, went across the common to the Dingley wood, where they are still, I am sure; and I should not wonder if the others soon joined them, for it is uncommon what a fancy those gipsies have for sticking to each other, especially in misfortune; and I should not wonder if they were to hang about here till they hear what becomes of this lad. He may be Pharold's son, for anything I know.'

'Would that he were!' cried the peer vehemently, the memory of his own son crossing the confused crowd of other thoughts that pressed upon his brain. 'I would find the means to wring his heart. But still,' he added, after pausing for some moments on the pleasant thoughts of revenge,—'but still the boy is cut off from all communication with them.'

'But we can let him have some, if your lordship pleases,' said the keeper. 'If your lordship remembers, I told you of a man named Harry Saxon, who always has a good deal to do with poachers and such like, and who put these gipsies up to deer stealing. Now we could let him get speech of the boy; and if any one heard of it, we would say it was only to see whether he could swear to the youth, and he would soon take any message to his people for him.'

'But will he undertake the task? and can we depend upon him?' asked the peer.

'Why, ye—s, my lord, I think we may,' answered Harvey thoughtfully. 'He's a good sort of a man enough; and, besides, I rather think I could send him across the water to Botany, if I liked, for something I saw him do one day, and he knows it too; and so he is always very civil and obliging to me.'

'Well may he be so,' replied the peer with a curling lip. 'But can you get at him soon? There is no time to be lost in such a business.'

'I can get at him in a minute,' answered the keeper; 'for he came up to my house about an hour ago; and he is in a bit of a fright about all this bad business of the shooting. So I told him to stay there till I had seen your lordship; and I would tell him how things went when I came back.'

'Go and bring him then,' said the peer quickly; 'go and bring him;—yet stay a moment, Harvey. Let me consider what is to be done when he does come. He is to be admitted to speech of this gipsy lad; and what then?'

'Why, my lord, I dare say the boy can be frightened into sending a message to Pharold to come down and help him out.'

'No,' said the peer, 'it must be better arranged than that. Let me see. The windows of the strong room look out into the close wood, and any one from the outside could saw away the iron bars. Yes, that will do. But the lad himself must be tutored, in the first place. Quick, then, Harvey, go, and bring your friend; and in the meantime I will see the boy alone. Do not come in till you hear that I have sent for you.'

The keeper retired, and the peer again rang the bell, to direct that the young gipsy should be brought before him once more. His orders were promptly obeyed; and two stout fellows appeared, with the prisoner between them.

'Leave him with me,' said the peer, as soon as they had brought him two or three steps forward in the room. The men, who had calculated on enjoying all the pleasures of a cross-examination, and who had even in their hearts formed the aspiration that they hoped his lordship would pump him well, stared with some mortification at being excluded from witnessing the mental torture of their fellow-creature; but Lord Dewry, who read something of the kind in their countenances, not only repeated his command, but bade them wait at the end of the adjoining passage till they were joined by Harvey, the head keeper. There was no resource; and therefore they obeyed, shutting the door, and leaving the peer face to face with the captive.

The gipsy youth might be eighteen or nineteen years of age. His form was full of nascent vigour, and his face was fine, but his whole countenance, though speaking, by its variety and play of feature, active imagination, and perhaps a degree of enterprise, betrayed a sort of uncertain, undecided expression, which is never to be seen in the face of the firm and the determined. The peer gazed on him for a moment, seeing all, and calculating all, in order to work upon his prisoner's mind, by both his circumstances and his weaknesses.

'You are very young,' he said at length, in a tone of stern gravity,—'you are very young to be engaged in crimes like these. What is your age?'

That sort of dogged sullenness, half shyness,

half hatred, which a contemned and separate race are, from their infancy, taught by nature to display towards their oppressors, was the only source of resistance in the character of the young gipsy, whose powers of resolution were naturally small, and whose mind was unfortified by firm and vigorous principles of any kind. It was sufficient in the present instance, however, to keep him silent; and he stood with his dark eyes fixed upon the ground, and his arms hanging by his side, apparently as unmoved as if the peer had addressed him in a language that he did not comprehend.

'You are very young,' repeated Lord Dewry, after waiting some time in vain for an answer,—'you are very young to be engaged in crimes like these. Life must be sweet to you:—there must be a thousand pleasures that you are just beginning to enjoy, a thousand hopes of greater pleasures hereafter;—there must be many friends that you grieve to part with,—and some,' he added, seeing the youth's lip quiver,—'and some that doubtless you love beyond anything on earth.'

A tear rolled over the rich brown cheek of the gipsy boy, and betrayed that he not only understood what was said to him, but felt every word at his heart's core, as the peer, with barbarous skill, sought out every fresh wound in his bosom, and tearing them open one by one, poured in the rankling poison of insincere commiseration. 'Ah!' continued Lord Dewry, 'it is sad and terrible, indeed, to think of being—at the very moment when one is the happiest—at the very moment when one loves one's friends the best—at the very moment, perhaps, when all our hopes are about to be fulfilled—to think of being cut off from them all, and to die a horrid and painful death! and yet such must be your fate, my poor boy—such must be inevitably your fate, as a punishment for the murder committed in my park last night.'

'I murdered no one,' cried the youth, with a convulsive sob, that nearly rendered what he said unintelligible. 'I murdered no one.'

'But your companions did,' answered the peer, glad to have forced him into breaking silence. 'You were not present, it is true; but you trespassed on my park for evil purposes with those who did commit murder, and are therefore an accessary to the deed. Banish all hope, poor boy; for to-morrow I must certainly commit you to the county gaol, from which you will only go to trial and to execution. I am sorry for you, I grieve for you, to think that you must be cut off in the prime of youth and happiness—I grieve for you, indeed.'

'Then why do you not let me out?' cried the lad. 'If you grieve for me, let me run away.'

'That is impossible,' answered the peer; 'but perhaps I may do something to make your fate less bitter. Death you must undergo; but in the mean time I may soften the strictness of your imprisonment. Is there any one whom you would wish to see—any of your friends and companions who might comfort you by coming to visit you?'

'What is the use, if I must die?' said the gipsy, sullenly, dropping his tearful eyes to the ground, and clenching tighter his clasped hands together; but Lord Dewry saw that there was something more working in his mind, and warily held his peace. 'There is none I should like to see but Lena,' said the gipsy, at length, with a deep sigh; 'and Pharold would not let her come, even if I were to ask.'

'And why not?' demanded the peer, affecting as much unconcern as it was possible for him to assume when coming near the very subject of his wishes. 'Why would any one prevent her from coming, if it would comfort you? He must be very cruel to deny you, when you have so short a time to live.'

'No, he is not cruel,' said the youth; 'he is hard, but not cruel; but he would not let her come, do you see, because a year ago I was to have had Lena for my wife—at least so Mother Gray always told me; but then Pharold loved her; and though her own love did not lie that way, her mother, when she was dying herself, gave Lena to him, because he was better able to take care of her than any one else. And he does not love to see Lena speak to me, I know.'

'So he took your bride from you,' said the peer, not a little delighted to hear tidings which promised so fairly for success,—'he took your bride from you, and now he is jealous of you. Well, then, listen to me, and mark well what I am about to say. Your fate is in your own hands. You are left to choose between life and death!'

The youth gazed dully in his face for a moment, as if he did not comprehend his words at first; but the next instant he burst forth, 'Life, life, life, then!' cried he, clasping his hands together and raising his eyes beaming with new hope,—'Life, oh, I choose life!'

'There is but one way, however,' replied the peer, 'by which you can obtain it. This Pharold—this very man who took away your bride—I have every reason to believe killed my brother and murdered my son.'

'Then that is the way he gets money, no one knows how,' cried the youth.

'Most probably it is,' answered Lord Dewry; 'but mark me, if you can contrive a means to get him into my power, you shall not only go free, but have a large reward. This is your only chance for life.'

The lad's countenance fell in a moment. He was young, and the better spirit was the first to act. 'No, no,' he cried, 'I hate Pharold, but I will not betray him.'

'Then you must die,' said the peer, sternly.

The better spirit was still predominant: no image presented itself to the youth's mind but that of betraying the chief of his tribe. He thought not for the moment of the loveliness of life, he thought not of the horrors of death, he remembered not either love or hate, in the strong impression of a duty which had been fixed in his heart from childhood; and he answered in a low sad tone, 'Then die I will.'

'But think,' said the peer, 'think what it is you choose—imprisonment in a close room by yourself for several days—then trial and condemnation—and then death upon a gibbet, with nobody to comfort you, nobody to speak to you; but you must go through the horror and the agony, and the shame, all alone and unsupported.' The boy shuddered, and the peer proceeded, changing the picture, however:—'This is what you choose. Now what is it you cast away?—life and happiness, and more wealth than ever you knew, and most probably the possession of the girl you love best upon the earth.'

The peer was experienced in temptations; for he had undergone and yielded to them himself, and he knew, by the dark histories of his own heart, all the wiles and artifices by which the fiend lures on successfully, even the firm and the determined, to acts at which they have shuddered in their days of innocence.

The young gipsy listened, and hesitated, and felt all his resolutions give way; but so fearful was the struggle in his bosom, that his lips trembled and his teeth chattered as if he had been shaken by an ague. The keen eye that was upon him, however, did not fail to mark and understand his emotion; and Lord Dewry proceeded,—'Well may Lena think you love her but little, when you scruple by a few words, to break the hateful bonds that tie her to this murderer Pharold, and when you have the power to make her your own, yet refuse to use it.'

'But I tell you,' cried the boy vehemently, 'that Lena would never consent—that even if she were to know that I had done such a thing she would hate me and curse me—that I should be driven forth from my people, and never see her more.'

'But neither she nor any one else,' replied the peer, 'need ever know one circumstance about it. If you will undertake to do what I wish, I will tell you a plan by which it may be accomplished, without any being on the earth knowing it but you and I.'

'But if Pharold should be innocent,' said the youth, 'the guiltless blood would be upon my hand, and it would curse me.'

'But if Pharold be innocent his blood shall not be shed,' replied the peer: 'let him prove his innocence, and he shall go as free as you; but he cannot prove his innocence, for he is guilty; and you, in delivering him up, do but what is right and good—you do but avenge the innocent blood he has shed, though at the same time you gain for yourself life, and liberty, and happiness, and the girl that you love.'

'Well, well, well,' cried the boy, 'tell me what it is I am to do.'

'Will you undertake it?' demanded the peer, eagerly.

'If—' answered the gipsy, 'if you will promise, by God and the heavens, that, if Pharold is innocent, you will let him go free.'

Lord Dewry paused for an instant. It is strange, but no less true than strange, that the mind not only habituates itself to evil, but habituates itself to a particular course of evil, and the same person who will boldly reiterate a crime to which he is accustomed will start at a much less heinous offence, if it be new to his habits. Thus Lord Dewry paused for an instant ere he swore to a promise which he intended to evade; but he soon remembered that in the course which he was pursuing, there was no halting at so airy a thing as an oath, and he replied, 'By all that is sacred he shall go free, if he proves himself innocent.'

'Well, then,' said the youth, 'I will do what you wish,—but, oh, if you deceive me!'

'Deceive you in what?' demanded the peer: 'I have promised that if he prove himself innocent he shall of course go free—it is but just.'

'But it was not of that I spoke,' said the gipsy: 'I thought if you were to deceive me into trapping Pharold, and then not to let me go myself!'

'On my honour! on my soul!' cried the peer, with a ready vehemence, which convinced the youth more easily than would have been possible, if he had known how often men pledge their honour and their soul when the real jewels are no longer theirs—when their true honour has been lost for years, and their soul pawned deeply to an eternal foe.

'Well, well,' he answered, 'I will do it. Tell me how it is to be done.'

'Tell me first,' said the peer: 'this Pharold—he is jealous of you it seems?' The boy smiled faintly. 'Will he then take sufficient interest in your fate to attempt to rescue you, if he thinks there is a probability of success?'

'That he will,' answered the youth; 'besides, if I could get at Lena she would persuade him. But how can I get at her? she will not come here, and I cannot go to her.'

'But do you think that if you were to send a message to her,' demanded Lord Dewry, 'that she would try to persuade him to attempt your rescue, and that she has influence enough to work him to her purpose?'

'That she has,' answered the gipsy. 'Pharold often gives her a cross word, but when she likes to try, she can always get her own way for all that. But how can I send a message to her? I know not where she is, nor where Pharold is, though once, as I looked out through the bars of the window this morning, I thought I saw him through the grey mist, standing under the distant trees, and watching the house. But they may have gone far before this time; yet if you were to let me out for a few hours I would soon find them.'

'We will seek a better way,' answered the peer, without taking any farther notice of the simple cunning with which the youth spoke. 'I hear from my gamekeepers that a man from one of the neighbouring villages has been inquiring for you, and most likely he knows where your friends and companions are. Now, as you promise to do what I ask, he shall be ad-

mitted to see you, and you must send to Lena whatever message you think will induce her to persuade Pharold to come to your rescue.'

'Yes,' said the boy; 'but I must first know how he can rescue me, for Pharold will never come unless he thinks it likely. Ay, and the story must be a clever one, too, for he is as cunning as a sentinel crow, and smells powder at a mile's distance.'

'I must leave you to frame the story as you think best,' replied the peer; 'but you can tell your fair Lena that if Pharold will come to your prison window with a sharp file or a sledge hammer, he can easily set you free by breaking the bars of iron that cross the opening. You may add that there is never any one on that side of the house all night, and so that he will be perfectly safe.'

The lad hung down his head, and the hot blood of shame, as he thought of what he was undertaking, rushed from his heart to his cheeks. There was again a momentary struggle, but the good had been conquered once already, and the thought of life, and Lena, and happiness, and freedom from the oppressive terror that weighed down his heart in his prison, got the better of everything besides, and he replied, 'But what shall I do if they thrust the file and the sledge hammer through the bars to me, and bid me work for myself?'

Lord Dewry instantly saw the validity of the youth's objection, and the probability that Pharold, instead of coming himself, would send some woman or some child with the implements which might be necessary for setting the prisoner at liberty. 'You must tell them,' he said, after some minutes' thought, 'that you are so tied that you cannot cut through the bars for yourself.'

'But the man who gives them the message will see that I am not tied,' replied the youth; and, after pausing for a few moments, he added, 'No, no, I have thought of a better way. I will not trust him with any particulars: I will bid him ask Lena and mother Gray to work Pharold to get me out; but, at all events, for some one of them to come down and speak with me through the bars to-night, and then I can make them do what I want. But you must let them go, remember,' he exclaimed. 'You must not stop the women if they come.'

'I shall certainly stop none but Pharold,' answered the peer; 'the rest may come and go as they like. But only do not you trifle with me, for be you sure that you shall not only not have your liberty, but that if Pharold be not in my power before to-morrow night is over, you shall be sent to the county gaol for instant trial.'

'And how,' said the youth, whose shyness was fast wearing away—'and how am I to get my liberty when Pharold is in your power?'

'The door shall be set open,' answered the peer, 'and you shall go out freely.'

'But how can I be sure of that?' he demanded again. 'You may keep us both, for aught I know. Will you write it down? for I have heard that you Englishmen are more bound by what is written than by what is said.'

Lord Dewry again paused for a moment, somewhat embarrassed; but after revolving the probable consequences in his mind for some time, he replied, 'I will write it down if you require it.'

'Do, do, then,' said the youth; and the peer, ringing the bell, ordered writing materials to be brought. As soon as they arrived, he sat down and drew up a promise, artfully couched in such terms as he felt sure could not in the slightest degree implicate his character or betray his real views, if ever it should be produced against him.

'As the prisoner,' so the writing ran, 'now in custody at Dimden is apparently only an accessary, and not a principal, in the crime lately committed at this place, I hereby promise him, on condition of his placing in the hands of justice the notorious felon Pharold, against whom various warrants have issued, at present unsuccessfully, that he shall be immediately set at liberty as soon as he has accomplished the same. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand this —— day of ——,' &c., &c.

The youth's eyes sparkled as he read, and the prospect of liberty and safety which opened before him, blotted out at once from memory the dark and villanous step which he must take to reach it. 'I will do it,' he cried, 'but you must let me do it my own way; for I must not let any one in the whole world know that it is my doing. It must seem that he is taken by accident, while helping me, and that I have made my escape in the meantime; and then I shall be free, and Lena will be mine!' and the youth clapped his hands in the vehemence of re-awakened hope.

'Well, well,' said the peer, his anxiety for his ultimate object coming eagerly upon him as soon as his immediate purpose was accomplished, 'the man I spoke of shall have admittance to you immediately. But, remember, you must lose no time; for the longest space I can afford you is this night and to-morrow night.'

'Some of the women will come to me to-night,' answered the youth; 'and to-morrow night, fear not, Pharold shall stand under the window of the prison room, some time between the rising of the moon and the sun. So watch well, and if you take him not, it is your own fault.'

'So be it, then,' said the peer; 'and now you must return to speak with the person I mentioned, who shall be sent to you.' Thus saying, Lord Dewry called back the two men who had brought the young gipsy thither; and, after bidding them take him back to the strong room, told them, in his hearing, as an earnest of his good-will, to let him have everything that could render him comfortable in strict imprisonment. As soon as the men appeared, the boy resumed his look of sullen shyness, and, hanging

his head, followed them in silence from the room.

The moment he had departed, the peer sent to inquire for the keeper, who had not yet returned, however; and Lord Dewry was kept for a short time under the irritation of his own impatient spirit. At length Harvey appeared, followed by his confederate, Harry Saxon, a man of about five-and-forty. He had a fresh country complexion, a high large nose, with small nostrils, a capacious mouth, furnished with white and regular teeth, a small, keen black eye, under a very overhanging and observing brow, a forehead low but broad, and surmounted with a layer of fine jet black hair.

The peer surveyed him as he entered with the keen eye of worldly experience, and saw that he was a man to be depended on by those who could pay him well. After a brief question or two, to which the other replied with sly significance, the peer explained to him the ostensible object he had in view, namely, that of securing the apprehension of a gipsy felon called Pharold, by the instrumentality of the boy they had taken on the preceding night, and asked him if he were willing to undertake the part he was to play, and to perform it carefully.

'You are, I hear,' he added, with some degree of irony, 'in some way acquainted with these gipsies, and may, therefore, not like to bring one of them to justice. If it be so, speak, and we will find some other person.'

'No, no, my lord,' answered the man; 'a gipsy! why I hate a gipsy! They come in and spoil everything like the regular trade. No, no, hang 'em all for me.'

Lord Dewry did not pause to inquire what Harry Saxon called the regular trade, but replied, 'Well, if such be your opinion, go in and speak to this lad. Do not let him know that you have had any conversation with me upon the subject, but offer to do anything for him that you can; and when you have heard what he has to say, come back and let me know the result.'

The peer added an injunction to be quick, and Harry Saxon was conducted by his worthy associate, Harvey, to the strong room in which the gipsy lad had been confined.

The chamber would have been in every respect a comfortable one had not the doors and windows been furnished on the outside with those appurtenances, obnoxious to all comfort, called bolts and bars. The house had been constructed when population was much thinner than at present, and when it was necessary that the dwelling of a magistrate, if situated far from any great town, should be provided with some place in which a prisoner might be confined for a few hours; for this purpose the room we speak of had been selected and fitted up, both on account of the distance at which it lay from the more frequented parts of the building, and of its proximity to a large old hall, which formed the extreme wing of the house, and topped the bank overhanging the river. This hall had often served, in cases of necessity, as a justice-room in the olden times.

The strong room, however, had never been intended for anything but temporary purposes, and was not at all calculated for securing a strong and determined prisoner for any length of time, as the windows, which opened into the park, were only closed by iron bars, which, as the peer had hinted, might easily be filed away from within, or forced off from without. These bars the boy took care to examine minutely as soon as he was taken back to the place of his confinement, and he then turned his eyes to the park beyond, to ascertain how far the plan he had to propose to Pharold would be recommended by the probability of its success.

A grove of old oaks and chestnuts came up nearly to the windows, so that there was plenty of shade to conceal any one who approached, except in the full light of day. But as he gazed, the boy's thoughts were soon drawn away from the dark scheme which the peer had suggested to him, by the sight of the world beyond his prison. Through the wide spaces between the trees the lawns and savannas of the park were to be distinguished, with other woods and groves beyond. The soft evening sunshine was sleeping upon the slopes and glistening on the river; and the deer were seen walking calm and free, through the long dry autumn grass, while the call of the partridge sounded from some distant fields, and everything spoke of liberty, and happiness, and peace. While he gazed, the passionate love of wild, unrestrained liberty, and of nature, in which his heart had been nurtured from infancy, grew overpowering. He seized the bars of iron in his hands, and strove to tear them open; but their strength resisted all his efforts, and he burst into tears to think that he must remain another day in bondage.

His eyes were still wet when the door opened, and the insidious prompter of the enterprise, which had deprived him of his liberty, entered the room. The youth, however, was, like the rest of the gipsies, ignorant that they had been betrayed; and although he had only seen the man once, he now received him gladly as an acquaintance and a friend.

Their conversation lasted about ten minutes, and at the end of that time the emissary returned to the peer to report what had just passed.

'Well, well,' demanded Lord Dewry, 'with what message has he charged you?'

'A very short one, my lord,' answered the man: 'he bade me seek out old Mother Gray, or some of the women, and tell them to come down to speak with him at the window to-night; so, I take it, that won't suit your lordship's purpose.'

'Yes it will,' answered the peer. 'He will probably employ the women to work upon the men.'

'Ay, ay, plough with the heifer,' answered the other; 'but I may as well, if your lordship has no objection, set them on the right track myself; and I will answer for it, I get them to persuade old Pharold to come down himself.'

'There is a very large reward offered,' answered the peer, dryly, 'to any one who will contribute to place him in the hands of justice; and if you are successful in the attempt, you shall not lose the reward. But do you think you can find these gipsies?'

'Why, from what Dick Harvey says, my lord,' he replied, 'I think there can be no doubt that I can find the women part of them, though, most likely, the men are hiding away. So, if your lordship will keep a good watch round the strong room, without letting the folks show themselves till they are sure of their man, I think we may calculate upon Master Pharold pretty certain.'

'In which case your reward is certain, too,' answered the peer; 'but now make haste upon your errand, my good man, for the sun will soon be going down, and you have but little time.'

'Oh, I don't dislike a walk in the twilight,' replied the fellow; and bowing low, but with a somewhat too familiar grin, he took his leave and retired.

Lord Dewry immediately proceeded to give orders for a strict watch to be kept upon the windows of the strong room during the two following nights; and took measures that an ambush should be laid in the immediate vicinity, in such a manner that any person approaching could not escape: but, at the same time, he carefully directed that if none but women appeared, they should be permitted to go as they came, not only without molestation, but with every precaution to prevent the least appearance of unusual watch.

This being done, he turned his steps to the chamber of Sir Roger Millington, for whose life the unfavourable opinion of the surgeon gave him no slight apprehension.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PHAROLD KEEPS HIS WORD.

THE person against whom so many subtle contrivances were directed, on leaving Colonel Manners, as we have described in a foregoing chapter, turned his steps towards the wood in which his own companions had sought refuge after the unfortunate events of the preceding night. He skirted along the hill, the summit of which it crowned; and, then, after following for a little way that part of the high road which traversed the little isthmus in the neighbourhood of which he had saved the life of Isadore Falkland, he struck soon after into the forest on the right. It is wonderful with what keen tact persons accustomed to such scenes and circumstances take advantage of slight and apparently insignificant indications to guide them on their way. A branch brushed aside, a trodden down flower, the sight or even the smell of smoke, the least sound of the human voice, will each aid them in their search; and by means of this kind Pharold, ere long, discovered the little glen in which his whole party had found an asylum.

At the moment he approached, had his keen mind not been engaged with many another thought, he might have remarked that there was some degree of bustle and consultation amongst the gipsies, which ceased as he came up. All, however, appeared glad to see him safe; and all crowded round to express the anxiety they had felt during his absence, and to question him as to the events which had befallen him. Lena hung upon his arm with evident pleasure at his return; but the fondness she displayed was more like that of a child towards a parent than that of a wife for a husband.

In answer to the inquiries of the whole party, Pharold—after having seated himself in the midst, and demanded some refreshment, which was speedily procured—related, briefly, all that had occurred as far as his own perils went. Of Colonel Manners he spoke as of a stranger, and neither noticed their encounter nor his promise of again meeting him, though he told the group around that ere an hour was over he must again set forth on matters of import not to be delayed.

'Well, I hope, at all events, that you are going to get poor Will out,' said the old woman we have so often mentioned. 'Poor boy, he has a hard fate.'

'I hope,' said Lena, seeing that Pharold made no answer,—'I hope——' but then she stopped, as if afraid of offending him.

'And what do you hope, Lena?' said Pharold, gravely, but not so sternly as was often his wont.

'I hope,' she said more boldly, but with the colour coming up in her brown cheek,—'I hope that some means will be found to set the poor boy free, for I am sure he was not the guilty person.'

As she spoke Pharold gazed on her with such grave earnestness that her latter words faltered; and even after she had concluded he still kept his eyes fixed upon her in silence, till one of the men, who had accompanied Dickon on the deer-stealing expedition, joined in to corroborate her words.

'No, no,' said the man, 'he was not so guilty as any of us. Dickon persuaded the rest of us, and we persuaded him; but it was a hard matter to do so, and then after all he never fired a gun.'

'Well,' said Pharold, 'I have done my utmost to free him: but he is in the hands of our enemies, who are keen, and vigilant, and many; and I see no way of delivering him from them but by force, which I will not employ, first, because it would fail, and next, because it would be sacrificing many of the innocent to deliver one, who, though less guilty than others, is still culpable. I see no other way.'

'Ay, but there is another way, Pharold,' said the old woman: 'they say that he is confined in what they call the strong room.'

'They say!' exclaimed Pharold, hastily: 'they say! Some one has been with you:

speak, who has been here? or has any one gone forth when I forbade it?'

The old woman only grinned at having betrayed herself, as Pharold looked sternly round upon the circle; but Lena cast herself upon his bosom, saying, 'Tell him the truth! It is always better to tell him the truth! Well, if no one else will, I will. Some one has been here, Pharold—some one who has seen the poor boy in prison; and he told us all how wretched he is, and also he said that William himself had sent him to us to say, that if any one would come down to-night or to-morrow night, to the window of the room where he is lying, they could easily wrench off the iron bars that kept him in, and set him free at once.'

'And who was the person that he sent?' demanded Pharold, sternly.

'Why it was just Harry Saxon, the game sneaker,' answered the old woman: 'who else should it be?'

'A dastardly villain!' said Pharold, hastily: 'fit to betray us all: speak no more of it. I know that man of old, and would not trust him with the life of a child, if he could gain by its destruction.'

'He seemed honest enough in this business,' said the man called Brown; 'for he told us all how he had got in to see the lad, and how he had traced us hither. He took some blame to himself, too, in the business of the deer stealing, for he was to have bought the venison from Dickon; and that was the reason why he went to see poor Will in prison, and was willing to do what he could to get him out. Now I would not promise to go till I knew what you thought of it, Pharold; but, if you like, I will go down to-night, for as to the man betraying us, you see I have no fear, because, if he had liked, he could have brought people to nab us all here. So I will go and try what I can do.'

'But did not Will say particularly,' cried the shrill tones of the old woman, 'that it must be some one who knew the place well, or they would get into a mess? If you go, Brown, you'll only get caught yourself, and spoil a hopeful plan for setting poor William free. There is no one that knows the place well but Pharold and I, because we know it of old; and as Pharold is afraid to go any more, I would go with all my heart, if I were strong enough to get the bars off; I could have done it once as well as the best man among you, but I am an old woman now. As for that, Pharold knows the place better than I do a great deal, for he lived in that very house for many a month, and——'

'Hold your peace, woman,' interrupted Pharold. 'The boy said to-night or to-morrow, did he not?'

'Yes, to-night or to-morrow,' answered Brown; 'but to-night were best, for who knows what may happen before to-morrow?'

'To-night, I cannot go,' answered Pharold, 'for I have pledged my word to be elsewhere, and I do not break my word: but to-morrow I will go; and I think that, perhaps, after all, I may be able to set him free. In the meantime, however, you, Mother Gray, shall go down this very night, to reward you for all the share you have had in the matter. You know the strong-room window, just in the angle, by the great hall. Get ye down thither at midnight; and tell the boy that I will come to-morrow night: bid him keep a good watch; and if he sees any one lurking about, as if watching, let him sing some of the songs that he sings so well, to warn me. You look out well, too, and mark everything about you, to tell me when I come back. You were never the wisest or the best, but I do not think you such a devil as to betray one wilfully.'

He looked sternly and keenly at her, but the beldam only answered in a jeering tone, 'No, no, Pharold, though I love you as much as a young sparrow loves a cuckoo poult, I'll not betray you, man.'

'Go then,' said Pharold, 'as soon as it is midnight: examine everything well; and tell the boy, through the bars of the window, that, although he deserves to suffer the consequences of his fault, yet we will do our best to rescue him for his youth's sake.'

He then turned to the rest, and gave directions for immediately removing their encampment to another spot.

'Quarter of a mile farther,' he said, 'you will come to a clear stream, broad but not deep, flowing from the heart of the wood, over a bed of sand and small clear stones. You can drive the carts up through the water till you reach a place where the banks are flat; and there, under the oaks and amongst the hazel bushes, you will find plenty of room and shelter. You, Brown, take every precaution you can to prevent the slightest trace being left of the course you have followed; make the people wade along the water—it is not deep enough to cover their ancles; send them, too, by different parties and in different ways; for remember that, because one of our number has killed two deer, the whole world that hated us before, will now think themselves justified to hunt us down like foxes. I can stay with you no longer, for the hour I named is near at hand—I am wearied and sad, and I feel as if the end were coming; but still I must keep my word, and do as I have done to the last.'

Some tears, from mixed emotions that would have defied analysis, had filled the eyes of the beautiful girl that reclined by his side; and as Pharold rose to depart, he saw them still glistening there. Taking her hand, he beckoned her with him, saying, 'Come with me for a moment, Lena: I would speak with you.'

She followed, and for about a hundred yards he led her on in silence; and then turning round, he pressed a kiss upon her lips. 'Remember me, Lena,' he said, 'when I am dead. Ever, at this hour, whatever may happen to you, whatever changes may befall, think of Pharold for a few short minutes; and mark what I tell you, each time you think of him—

whatever you may feel now—you shall regret him more, till, on your dying day, you shall love Pharold as Pharold now loves you. Remember, Lena, remember, remember!' and, turning away, he left her with her bright eyes dropping fast unwonted tears.

Alas, alas! the constancy and resolution of youth, what frail things they are! and how fast the ephemeral feelings and purposes of the hour give place to others as frail and vain! When Lena turned away from Pharold, she had believed that for no boon on earth would she do aught that could offend him; but ere many minutes were over she was listening to the persuasions of the old woman, that had led all those wrong who had confided in her, and was combating faintly and more faintly the arguments which age and cunning used, to induce her to visit that night the place where her unhappy lover was confined. Lena listened and resisted, till she listened and yielded; and midnight found her standing with the old woman under the window of the strong room in Dimden Park.

In the meanwhile Pharold pursued his way to rejoin Colonel Manners; but there seemed to be some bitter feeling sitting heavy at his heart. The light and agile step had become slow; the quick, keen eyes were bent thoughtfully upon the ground; more than one sad sigh burst from his bosom; and the spirit and the heart seemed to mourn. It might be that Pharold perceived that he was not loved; it might be that he felt he had set the whole fortunes of his being upon a hazardous chance: but as we have not paused to trace his love, we shall not dwell long upon his disappointment.

As he approached the spot where his unsuccessful struggle had taken place with Colonel Manners, he felt some sort of bitterness of heart, to think that he had been overcome. Vanity will have her share in all; and happy it is—ay, even more than we can expect—when she changes not the pain of her wound into hatred of those who have inflicted it. Manners was already on the spot, and the first words of the gipsy were those of human kindness. 'How is she?' he asked abruptly. 'How is the young lady? You have seen—you have told her all is well, of course?'

'I have,' answered Manners, 'and her heart is greatly lighter: though she will remain still anxious and unsatisfied till I have with my own eyes seen her cousin, and can report to her the state of his health.'

'Fear not,' answered the gipsy; 'I have promised to take you to him, and there is not that power under the heavens which should ever induce me to break my word, while I am capable of performing it.'

'I do not fear in the least,' answered Manners; 'I knew perfectly that you would keep your promise, and confidently assured the family at Morley House that you would lead me to De Vaux this night. I need hardly tell you how much joy that assurance gave them, and how much gratitude they felt to him who made the promise.'

'Speak not of gratitude,' answered the gipsy. 'I only regret that from the first I had not foreseen what pain might fall on some of the good and kind, and that I did not assure myself of how I ought to act. But if you knew, gentleman, what a life I have led for the last three days, you would easily make excuse for some forgetfulness of others,—a life so different from that to which we are accustomed. We come in sunshine, and pitch our dwelling in the warm bosom of nature, with beauty all round us, and neither care nor strife amongst ourselves; but now we have been hunted, and sought, and had to change our dwellings from place to place; and in order to provide that we left no traces of our way, we have been forced to double like a poor hare before the accursed hounds, to think every footstep the signal of an enemy, and every rustle of the leaves to look upon as the indication of an ambush; I fear me, too, I fear me that their persecutions are not yet over. But let us on—here lies our road.'

'I trust,' said Manners, following him,—'I trust that as you are able to clear yourself in this business of my friend De Vaux, all the other suspicions against you will be found equally groundless; and then you may follow your way of life once more in peace.'

'No, no,' answered the gipsy, 'he would persecute me still. Once he has made a false accusation against me, and he will never abandon it as long as he and I are on the face of the same earth—never, never! I know him too well.'

'I do not clearly understand of whom you speak,' answered Manners, keeping by the side of the gipsy, although the pace at which he had set off seemed accelerated at every step by the angry feelings that he was stirring up in his own bosom. 'You do not name the person. Whom do you mean?'

'Whom should I mean?' answered the gipsy sharply. 'Whom but him who, born with violent passions and a haughty nature, was bred a lawyer, in order that dark cunning should be added to a bold spirit and a shrewd mind. I speak of Lord Dewry; and I tell you that he will never cease to persecute me. Does he not now hold, in fast confinement, a boy of our people, whom he well knows to be innocent?'

'There is, certainly,' answered Manners, 'a gipsy boy confined at Dimden, for I saw him there this morning; but Lord Dewry, as well as all the people of the neighbourhood, informed me that he had been taken in an attempt to steal the deer in the park.'

'He was not present,' said the gipsy. 'He saw not the beast slaughtered by the madheaded fools that did it, any more than I did. But he keeps him because he is a gipsy boy, not that he thinks him guilty. And so you saw him, did you?' continued Pharold, striving, with a slight mingling of the artful cunning of his people, to discover what Manners knew of the situation of the young gipsy,—'so you saw him;

and, doubtless, he is to be sent soon to the county gaol, to die of imprisonment and despair at losing his blessed freedom.'

'I did not hear any mention of such an intention,' answered Manners. 'Every one present joined in accusing the youth of direct participation in the deer-stealing; and he himself kept so obstinate a silence, that there was no possibility of drawing from him even a word that might exculpate himself.'

'And do you call it obstinate silence to refuse to answer either the subtle or the idle questions of his enemies?' demanded the gipsy.

'There is the mistake into which your people fall too often, and with too fatal an effect,' answered Manners. 'You consider us, on all occasions, as your enemies, and act towards us as if we were such, instead of endeavouring to make us your friends, which might often be accomplished,—always, I might say, with good men, were your actions to tend to that purpose. In the instance you speak of, the principal questions were addressed to your young companion by myself. Their object was solely to elicit some news of my friend De Vaux; and had he answered them frankly, he would have made a friend who might have rendered him service.'

'And he refused to answer?' demanded the gipsy.

'Not exactly refused,' replied Manners; 'but answered only by an unmeaning monosyllable, or kept a profound silence.'

'He did right,' cried the gipsy, 'the boy is more deserving than I thought him; he merits an effort.'

'We judge very differently,' answered Manners: 'I thought he did very wrong; and had he given me the information I sought, it is more than probable that I should have met you with very different feelings from those with which I at first saw you this night.'

'He did right!' cried the gipsy: 'would you have had him betray secrets intrusted to him? or was he to judge what I might think fit to be revealed? No, no: silence was his best security against discovering, through fear, or through folly, those things, the value of which he knew not. He has shown both more prudence and more resolution than I thought he possessed. However, he could have told you nothing, for he knew nothing, not even the path we are now treading.'

'Well, then, his candour would only have served to give a favourable opinion of himself,' Manners rejoined, 'without injuring you, or betraying your confidence.'

'How can you tell that?' cried the gipsy,—'how could he tell it, either? Might you not have led him on to other things? Might you not have wrung from him, if he had spoken candidly, as you call it, one admission after another, till you had discovered all that he could tell. Oh, we know your artful ways—your examinations and cross-examinations, which would make an angel of truth and wisdom seem like a liar and a fool. We know your skill in making men reveal what they would not, and speak two apparently opposite truths without allowing them to give the explanation; so that they seem to contradict themselves at every word. We know you; and we have one way, and only one, to disappoint you, which is silence. You can make nought of that.'

Manners saw that, where both the principles and the course of the reasoning were so different, discussion was of very little use; and he consequently made no reply to the gipsy's tirade. Pharold, however, wished the conversation prolonged upon the same topic; for with all the frank generosity of his individual nature, the habits and the character of the gipsy still modified and influenced the other qualities of his heart and his mind. His character, as a man, was open and candid; but the gipsy often acted to render it stubborn and sullen when oppressed, or even wily and artful when some peculiar object was to be gained.

He now greatly desired to obtain from Colonel Manners, as a sincere and independent person, some information concerning the exact situation of the boy William. He did not choose, however, to let his design become apparent, and therefore approached his object with a careful art, which was not a part of his natural but rather of his acquired character.

'Poor boy,' he said, as soon as he perceived that Manners did not reply,—'I am sorry for him. He has never known anything but liberty, and the enjoyment of all the free, wide, beautiful world: he has never known what it is to have fetters on his young limbs, or to be shut from the air and light of heaven, in some dark and gloomy dungeon.'

'You must not let your imagination draw such a picture of his situation,' answered Manners, who, having nothing to conceal, was easily led in the direction the gipsy wished. 'The boy is not and cannot be in such a state as you suppose. He has no fetters upon his limbs; and, in all probability, is as well treated as a proper regard to his safe custody will permit.'

'It will be pain and grief enough,' rejoined the gipsy, 'for one who has never in his life been debarred from turning his steps in whatsoever direction he thought fit,—who has never been cut off from the sight of nature, and the breath of the free air, since his eyes were first opened upon God's heaven and earth, and the breath of life was breathed into his nostrils,—it will be pain and grief enough for him to be thrust into some dark and gloomy dungeon.

'Of course,' answered Manners, 'as I am nearly unacquainted with this part of the country and with Dimden Hall, I cannot be aware of the nature of the place in which the lad is confined. A dungeon it is not, certainly; for such things are now, thank God, quite out of the question. But you, yourself,—at least all I have heard would lead me to suppose so,—must know Dimden Hall far better than I do, and, perhaps, may be aware of where the

strong room is; for it was to it that I heard Lord Dewry direct him to be taken, after we had in vain tried to gain any information from him.'

'If he be there, he may do well,' answered the gipsy; 'but, probably, they will remove him to the county gaol, and there he will have sad and bitter hours enough.'

'I should certainly think that they will not do so,' answered Manners, 'if what you tell me in regard to his innocence of all participation in the actual slaughter of the deer be correct. The magistrates will, of course, investigate the matter, and seek full evidence of the facts, before they either commit the boy, or even send him off to the gaol, which, I understand, is many miles distant; so that it is much more probable that he will remain where he is for the present.'

The gipsy saw well that Manners spoke without disguise, and that he had, in fact, nothing more to tell in regard to the situation of the prisoner. However, he had gained at least the certainty that the lad was confined in the strong room, which he knew well; that he was not likely to be speedily removed, and that he was not encumbered with fetters, to impede his escape. Lest he might have been so secured. Pharold had entertained some fear, as he knew that blood had been shed in the encounter between the deer-stealers and the keepers, and thought it more than likely that the peer would strive to prove the lad William had been an actual participator in that part of the unfortunate affair, and would treat him accordingly. His next anxiety was to know what was the state of the men who had been wounded, and what was the exact charge against himself, in regard to the affray in Dimden Park, as well as what evidence had been given to inculpate him.

He had found so much frankness in the replies of Colonel Manners to his former inquiries, however, that he now quitted the artful path which he had taken, and spoke more boldly of his own situation. 'I would fain know,' he said, after he had walked on about two hundred paces farther in silence,—'how I stand, in regard to that false accusation which my enemy brought against me, respecting the slaughter of his pitiful deer. As I passed through the country this morning, after quitting his park, I gained some tidings; but when I first met you, gentleman, to-night, you told me that though I might be guilty of other things, you knew me to be innocent of that. If you be, as you seem to be, a friend to justice and humanity, you will tell me how you know that charge to be false, that I may prove it so, too, by some proof that will be better received than the mere oath of my own people.'

'I can have no objection whatever,' Manners answered, 'to tell you at once how I was led to the conclusion that you mention. There were two persons wounded in that unfortunate affair—one, a gentleman, who is now lying at Dimden, and another, a keeper, who was removed from the park to his own cottage. As I found that the surgeon had confined his attention to the person at Dimden—whose wound is far the most dangerous—I went down to the cottage of the keeper to inquire how he was going on——'

'Good and kind,' interrupted the gipsy, with one of those bursts of vehement feeling, to which he, at times, gave way. 'Ah, I see and understand it all! The mercenary manufacturer of diseases, and maker of men's ills, remained with the gentleman who could pay him for his fancied skill, and left the poor man to do the best for himself; and you went down to comfort him whom the other had neglected.'

'Not exactly so,' answered Manners: 'the wound of the one was much more severe than that of the other, and the surgeon stayed where his presence was most necessary. I went down, however, and sat with the poor fellow some time; and he distinctly informed me, not only that you had not been present when the deer were killed, but that you were coming up and calling to the others not to fire at the moment that the guns went off. He said, too, that if it had not been for your interference there would have been far more bloodshed; and I strongly advise you, should there ever be any investigation of this business, to call the keeper Jones as a witness to establish your innocence.'

'While I can keep my liberty,' said the gipsy, they shall never hold me in their gripe. Besides, he would find witnesses enough to swear away my life, if he were to bribe them with half his fortune.—But the wounded men,—are they likely to die, did you say?'

'I trust not,' answered Manners; 'and with care and attention the wound of the keeper will not prove even dangerous. The other gentleman I did not see, but I hear he is much more severely hurt.'

'What is his name?' demanded the gipsy.

'Sir Roger Millington, I think was the name,' answered Manners; 'but I did not pay it any particular attention.'

'Sir Roger Millington!' repeated the gipsy, musing,—'I do not know him; and yet it sounds in my ears like a word spoken in a dream. Oh yes, yes—I remember now: it was to him that the money was owing.'

'What money?' demanded Manners, in some surprise.

'Never mind,' answered the gipsy; 'but, be sure, if that man dies, my enemy will find means to make me out his murderer. Mark that, gentleman, and remember, hereafter.'

'It is impossible that he can do so,' answered Manners, whose confidence in British justice was much stronger than that of the gipsy. 'I understand that there were eight or nine people present. One of them, who has suffered severely, has already borne witness to your innocence; and depend upon it that, amongst the rest, you would find plenty more to do the same. But it strikes me as extraordinary, I do confess, that you should seem to apprehend much more evil from an affair in which you can easily exculpate yourself, than from a charge which, referring to

matters long gone, and to circumstances of which there could be but few witnesses, must be much more difficult to be met in a satisfactory manner,—I mean the charge of having killed the late Lord Dewry.'

'I will tell you why,' answered the gipsy. 'In regard to this buisness, he can prove something against me—that I was in his park without right—at a suspicious hour—when persons were committing an unlawful act—and those people my own nation, and my own comrades. He may make out a plausible tale, and a little false swearing would easily do the rest. But in regard to the other, I laugh him to scorn; for why? because, when I will, I can blow the cloud away, like the west wind when it sweeps the mist from the valleys—because I can dispel it all, and prove my own innocence beyond a doubt—by proving who it was that did do the deed!'

'Do that,'—answered Manners, eagerly, 'do that, and, beyond all doubt, Lord Dewry will forbear every other proceeding against you.'

'Would he, indeed!' cried the gipsy, with a contemptuous laugh,—'Yet, perhaps, he might;—but I will tell you, gentleman,—if I did do so, I should not stand in need of his forbearance. But I will not do it; no, never! not if they were to cast a mountain upon me, it should not crush that secret from my heart till the right hour be come.'

'Indeed!' said Manners; 'that is a strange determination; 'but, however, you act and reason upon principles so different from those that influence ordinary men, that it is useless to inquire why you run great risks yourself, with motives apparently very slight.'

'I do it, because it is written in the book of that which I am to do,' answered the gipsy. 'But, you say right; we do act and we do think upon different principles; and it is useless to inquire into mine, for you would not understand them; and yet I hold you to be a good man—better than most—braver—wiser than the great part of your fellows. Had you not been both brave and wise, you would never have learned from me what you are to know to-night,—the fangs of tigers would not have torn it from me by any other means.'

'I hope,' answered Manners, with a smile, 'that the secret will not be kept much longer unrevealed; for we have already walked several miles, and our fair friend, the moon, is going down to rest, as if she were as tired as I am.'

'And who that sees her sink,' said the gipsy, turning round, as Manners spoke, and gazing for a moment on the setting orb,—'and who that sees her sink shall dare to say that he will ever see that calm and splendid sight again? She goes, we know not whither, travelling alone upon her oft-trodden path. She saw my people live and rule in other lands. She has seen them bow the necks of proud and haughty enemies beneath their chariot wheels. She has seen them fall day by day, till they are but a scattered remnant, dashed like the foam of a broken wave over the lands around, while their temples and their palaces, their homes and their altars, are the dwellings of the wolf and the jackal, that howl beneath her light. She has seen them, mighty and nothing; and, perhaps, when our bones are whitening beneath her beams, in the long wide vacancy of after-times, she may, also, see the despised nation reinstated in its glory, and forgetful of the rod of the oppressor; but you mind not such things—you look upon us merely as wandering outcasts of some unknown race.'

'No, indeed,' answered Manners, 'you do me wrong. I have always looked upon your people with much interest and curiosity. There is a sort of mystery in their history and their fate that will not let any one, who thinks and feels, regard them with indifference.'

'There is a mystery!' answered the gipsy,—'but it matters not. This is not the time to solve it;' and—as every person who has ever conversed with one of the more intelligent and better informed of the gipsies must have remarked as their invariable custom when spoken to either upon their language or history,—he suddenly turned the conversation to other things, content with the vague hints of brighter times and more extended power, which he had already given. Manners endeavoured more than once to bring him back to the subject, but the gipsy pertinaciously avoided any approach to it. Nor was his companion more successful in an endeavour to lead him to the subject of De Vaux, in regard to whom Pharold pointedly refused to answer any questions. 'You will know very soon all that you can know about the matter,' he replied; 'and I do not choose to speak at all on subjects where I might speak too much.'

Manners pressed the question no farther, and followed in silence.

The aspect of the country was now very different from that on the other side of the hills; and although the light of the setting orb was not sufficient to display distinctly the various objects in the landscape, yet the long lines of light and shade that varied the wide extent below their feet gave Manners the idea of a rich and softly undulating country, spreading for many miles without any considerable eminence. From the spot where they then stood, the road which they had now gained wound through some young plantations down towards the plain; but ere they had finished the descent the moon was lost below the horizon, and the eye could no longer trace any but the objects in its immediate vicinity. Manners remarked, however, that along the young plantings were neat trimmed hedges, and that clean shining white gates gave entrance into the fields which they skirted. Just at the same moment, too, a village clock, with its kindly bell, told the hour, sounding clear and calm upon the still night air; and Manners, though without any great object in doing so, paused to make out the inscription of

one hundred and some miles from London, and to count twelve, struck distinctly on the bell of the clock.

'Will not this be a very late hour,' he asked, turning to the gipsy, who had paused also,—'to visit my poor friend, especially if he be ill as you say both in body and in mind!'

'We will see that presently,' answered the gipsy: 'if he sleep, so much the better. You can wait till to-morrow. My part of the errand must be done to-night, or never, for something at my heart tells me, that I shall not long be able to walk whither I will throughout the world.'

At length the gipsy stopped at a gate, opened it, and bade his companion pass in. Manners did as he was desired, and found himself standing on a neat gravel walk, with a shrubbery on either hand, plentifully provided with laurels, hollies, and many another evergreen. The gipsy followed; and the walk, skirting for a couple of hundred yards round a trim, smooth, shaven green, brought them in front of a neat house, built of brick, and evidently modern in all its parts. Plate glass, a-well-a-day! did not in those times decorate even the houses of the greatest in the land; and the dwelling before which they now stood, although it was clearly the abode of affluence, had no pretensions to be anything more than a handsome house of the middle rank. It might be the new-built rectory of some wealthy parish, or the place of retirement of some merchant who had had wisdom enough to seek repose at the point where competence stops short of riches: but it had no one circumstance which could entitle it to affect the name of the Mansion, or the Hall, or the Abbey, or the Castle; and in those days the word cottage had never yet been applied to designate a palace. It had its little freestone portico, however, and its two low wings, in the windows of each of which there were lights. It was evident, therefore, if this was the place where Manners was destined to find De Vaux, that, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, there were other persons awake in the house besides those who might be supposed to watch in the chamber of an invalid.

As they came near, the gipsy advanced a step before his companion, and rang the bell. A few minutes elapsed without any one appearing to answer the summons; but just as Pharold was about to repeat it, the door was opened by a servant, carrying a light, which was almost instantly extinguished by the gust of wind which rushed into the unclosed door. There had been time enough, however, for the man to recognise Pharold, and to bid him come in, as if his visit were a thing of course; and in the moment that the light had remained unextinguished, Colonel Manners could distinguish the countenance of the servant, the features of which, he felt convinced, were not unknown to him.

'Come in, sir,' said the gipsy.—'Is there any one in the parlour, John?' he added, turning to the man as Manners entered.

'No one, Mr. Pharold,' answered the servant, in tones that were still more familiar to Manners's ear than his features had been to his eye. 'My master is in the little room beyond.'

'Then walk in here, sir; and wait for me one moment,' said the gipsy; and Colonel Manners, without question, walked into the dark room, of which Pharold had opened the door, and waited patiently to see how all the strange affair in which he was engaged would end.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

THE room was, as we have said, quite dark, with the exception of a narrow line of light, which found its way under a door on the opposite side of the chamber; and by the time that Manners had been there two minutes he heard voices speaking in that direction. What was said by the first speaker, whom he concluded to be Pharold, did not make itself heard in the apartment where Manners stood; but the moment after another voice was distinguished, saying, in a louder tone, 'You have done wrong, Pharold. My mind was still undecided; and this will force me to act, whether I will or not.'

Pharold's voice replied at considerable length, and was apparently still going on, when the other exclaimed, hastily, 'But, good God, did you not let her know? Did you not send her the note I despatched to you for that purpose?'

'What note? When did you send?' demanded Pharold, eagerly. 'I had no note.'

'This is most unfortunate,' replied the other. 'I sent up a note to you, intended to be conveyed to her for the purpose of putting her mind at ease; and it should have reached you beyond all doubt; for I gave it with my own hand to the youth Dickon yesterday morning, when he came with the message from you.'

'Ay, that is it,' answered the gipsy. 'I chose him as my messenger to keep him out of evil; but ere I could get back to my people, I found that, on some pretence, strangers on horseback were watching for us on the common, and I betook me to the wood again. But they set a watch round the wood; and it was long ere I could slip through unseen; and when I did so, and got to the tents under Dimden wall, I found that this very Dickon had seduced several others to go and shoot the deer in the park. Deer were killed, the keepers were met, blood was shed, and I drove the offender out from among us, that he might not lead others again into evil, and draw down the rage of the powerful upon us. Thus I saw him but for a moment, and he went without giving me your letter.'

Now Manners, although he could not help hearing what was passing, had a great objection to so doing; and he had therefore from the very

beginning contrived to make as much noise as possible, by every means that suggested itself, in order both to render the sounds which reached him indistinct, and to make the speakers aware that their conversation might be overheard. Their first eagerness, however, prevented them from taking warning; but at length their tone was lowered, and for the next five minutes Manners heard nothing farther than a low, indistinct murmur, which sufficiently showed that the conference was continued, but did not betray the matter thereof.

At length, however, the second voice spoke louder, in the sort of marked manner with which one ends a private conversation, by words which have little meaning to any ear but that of the person to whom they are addressed. 'Well, well, it is time that such a state should be put an end to! As to this other business, there is nothing to fear from Colonel Manners: I know him well, as I told you before; and were I to choose any man in whom to confide, it would be him. Now rest you, Pharold, while I go and speak with him. Would to God that you would quit this wandering life, and now in your age wisely accept from me, what you foolishly rejected in your youth from one long dead; but rest you, as I have said, and I will return in a few minutes to hear out your account.'

Pharold's reply was not distinct; but the next moment the door opened between the two rooms, and Manners was joined by a gentleman whom we have seen once, and only once, before in the course of this history. It was, in short, the same hale, handsome old man whom we last heard of conversing with the gipsy Pharold, in the beginning of this book, who now advanced with a light into the dark room in which Manners had been left. He could not be less than sixty-three or four years of age; but his frame appeared as vigorous as if twenty of those years had been struck off the amount. His figure was tall and upright, and his step had in it a peculiar bold and firm elasticity, that spoke the undiminished energy of both mind and body. He was, in short, a person whom, once seen, it would be difficult to forget; and although the light he carried dazzled Manners's eyes a little, yet the instant he entered the room his visitor advanced towards him, holding out his hand, and exclaiming, 'My dear Sir William Ryder, I am delighted to meet you again, and to meet you in England.'

'Not less delighted than I am to see you, Manners,' answered the other, 'although we meet under somewhat strange circumstances, and though I am obliged to bid you for a short time, forget that I am Sir William Ryder, without forgetting that I am a sincere friend. My name, for the present, is Mr. Harley; and now, having introduced myself as such, let us sit down, and talk over old stories.'

'But, first, my dear sir,' said Manners, 'a word or two of new stories, if you please. I am most anxious to inquire after my poor friend, De Vaux, though no longer anxious in regard to his situation, now that I find he is in hands so kind and so skilful as yours. Indeed, the first sight of your servant, though I caught but a glimpse of him, set my mind at ease regarding my poor friend, as far as it can be at ease till I hear how he is, and what is the matter with him.'

'He is better,' answered Sir William Ryder; 'and so far banish all anxiety, for he will do well. I know such affairs of old; and as he has been neither scalped nor tomahawked by any of my children of the Seven Nations, I will answer for his recovery. But I dare say you wonder at his being here with me; and, indeed, it is altogether an odd coincidence, for I can assure you that it is by no plot or contrivance of mine that I have got you and him once more under my roof together, when the last time we so met was in my wigwam on the very farthest verge of the inhabited world.'

'But first tell me what is the matter with him,' said Manners; 'and then I will put all sorts of questions to you, which you shall answer or not as you think fit.'

'What is the matter with him!' cried Sir William Ryder; 'did not my friend Pharold tell you that he had got a pistol-shot in his side, which had broken two of his ribs?'

'Good God! no,' cried Manners: 'I am excessively sorry to hear it; but how did it occur—in a duel?'

'No,' answered the other; 'no: he did it himself; but understand me—not intentionally—he is not such a fool. However, he will do well: the ball has been extracted; he has very little fever: no organ important to life has been touched, and all promises fairly.'

'But, indeed, my dear Sir William, you must tell me more,' said Manners. 'How did this happen? for though I have seen accidents enough of different kinds, yet I cannot understand this affair at all.'

'Why, I do not very well know how to explain it,' said the other musing, 'without entering into unnecessary particulars. However, the fact is this: he went out at night, it seems, to see my friend Pharold, who, I need not tell you, is no ordinary person. However, your friend did not know his character or his worth, and he placed a brace of horse pistols in his bosom. He must certainly have had one of them cocked, too, though he will not acknowledge it: but the end of the matter was that he heard some very bad news; and being like all his race, subject to violent fits of passion, he cast himself down like a madman, the pistol went off, and the shot was within a few inches of his heart. Pharold, who was present and alone, did not very well know what to do with him; but carrying him in his arms as far as he could, he called some of his own people, bound up the poor boy's wounds as well as circumstances admitted, and brought him here, knowing that in other years I was upon terms of intimacy with his father, and loved him still, notwithstanding one or two little causes of misunderstanding between us.'

Manners listened in silence, and he certainly

did not forget the terms in which Lord Dewry had spoken of the very person who now alluded so mildly to him; but as he was by no means fond of making mischief upon any pretence, and knew that Sir William Ryder was not a man in whom personal fear would act as any check upon resentment, he felt no inclination to mention one word of the peer's vituperation of his former friend. At the same time, the kindly tone in which Sir William Ryder spoke did not at all lead Manners to believe that he was the person in fault. The thoughts which crossed the gallant officer's mind, however, must have had some visible representatives in his countenance; for his companion looked at him with a smile, adding, 'I know well what you are thinking—that probably Lord Dewry does not speak so gently of Sir William Ryder as Sir William Ryder does of him. I have heard so before. Nevertheless, Manners, I shall not call him out, and amuse the world with two men of sixty fighting a duel. Nor is Colonel Manners one to think the worse of me for acting as I do, nor to doubt my motives, though my conduct be a little eccentric. Is it not so, my friend?'

'It is, indeed,' answered Manners; 'and be you quite sure, my dear sir, that so firm is my confidence in your honour and integrity, from personal knowledge—which is better than all the gossip in the world—that I would never hear the name of Sir William Ryder mentioned with disrespect without taking the liberty of resenting it.'

'I believe you, Manners, from my soul,' answered his companion: 'but to return to our poor friend De Vaux—as soon as he was brought here, I of course sent for the best advice that was to be procured, the ball was extracted, and, as I have said, he is better. He is at present, I am happy to say, in a sound and comfortable sleep; but if you will take up your abode with me till to-morrow, you shall see him, and judge of his condition for yourself. A room shall be prepared for you immediately.'

'I will willingly lie down to take a little rest,' answered Manners: 'but let me beg you, my dear sir, to have me called as soon as De Vaux wakes, and is willing to see me; for I left a poor young lady, his cousin,—and there are ties of affection stronger than those of mere relationship between them,—waiting anxiously to hear some tidings of him; for until this very night we have all imagined him murdered.'

'Ah, poor girl!' said Sir William Ryder, in a tone of deep sympathy. 'She must have suffered dreadfully, I am afraid; but I can assure you that her having been kept even an hour in suspense is neither to be attributed to me nor to her cousin. His first thought was of her, his first words, after he saw me, were to beg that I would instantly write to her, in order to tell her what had occurred, and to soothe her mind as far as possible. Nay more, though suffering much pain till the ball was extracted, he insisted upon writing a few words with his own hand, to comfort her as far as possible. Though I would fain have prevented an exertion which might injure him, I loved him for his obstinacy, Manners. The note was sent to Pharold, with directions to forward it to her; but neither note nor directions, it seems, ever reached the gipsy.'

Manners could not refrain from saying, 'It would have been better to have sent it direct to herself, Sir William. You must remember, my excellent friend, that you are no longer amongst your children, as you call them, the Indians, and that you will meet with another class of vices and virtues also, here. What you would trust to a Mohawk, if he promised to perform it, and feel convinced that nothing but death would prevent its execution, is not at all to be confided to a common messenger in England, and——'

'I know all that, my friend,' interrupted his companion; 'but I had no choice. At that time I was not at all certain whether I should let any one know that I was in England or not; and had I sent the note direct to Morley House, such a communication must have been opened as would instantly have put an end to my incognito. One messenger might have failed me as well as another, and it was owing to an accident which no one could foresee that the note was not delivered.—So much for your rebuke, Manners,' he continued, smiling: 'but now tell me how the poor girl is; for the first question of my patient, when he hears that you are here, will be, "How is Marian de Vaux?"'

'Alarm and agitation had rendered her seriously ill,' answered Manners; 'so much so, indeed, that the medical man found it necessary, during the whole of yesterday and this morning, to keep her feelings deadened, as it were, by laudanum—to the great risk of her health as he acknowledged—but it was the lesser of two evils.'

'Sad, sad, indeed!' cried Sir William Ryder, rising from his seat, and walking backwards and forwards in some agitation,—'and I am afraid that I have had something to do with the whole business; but I trust she is better now—poor girl! I am grieved, deeply grieved. But say, Manners, how was she when you left her?'

'Infinitely better, I am happy to say,' answered Manners; 'for your friend, Pharold, permitted me to inform her that De Vaux was safe at least, though he tied me down to strict conditions. That piece of news, of course, relieved her greatly; but not so much so as to set her mind at ease, till she hears tidings from me, of her cousin's exact situation, which I trust to be able to give her early to-morrow.'

'Undoubtedly,' answered Sir William Ryder. 'Nay, if you think it would be any great comfort to her, we will send off a man on horseback this very night, to calm her with farther assurances.'

'Unless,' answered Manners, 'I may be permitted to say that you will give herself and Mrs. Falkland a welcome to visit De Vaux in person, I think that I had better not send, but wait till I can communicate some farther information myself.'

Sir William Ryder hesitated. 'I am afraid,' he said;—'that will be impossible, just at present. But she will believe your assurance, of course; and I think that you may venture to tell her that her cousin is under kind and careful hands, by which nothing will be neglected to promote his speedy recovery.'

'I will certainly give the fullest assurances of that fact,' answered Manners. 'But what reason am I to assign for her being debarred from seeing and attending her cousin, when I have been admitted? She will certainly think it mysterious.'

'As you do, Manners,' said Sir William, with a smile. 'But listen to me, and I will tell you several of the many reasons which have brought me back to a land which I have abandoned for long years; and out of those reasons you shall see whether you can find a motive to assign to Miss de Vaux for my mysterious conduct. In the first place, I, like most men, have some friends and relations; and I was seized with a longing to see them, to assure myself with my own eyes of their fate and their happiness, ere I laid my head down upon its last pillow in another land. The same longing seized me about twelve years since, but then I resisted; for long ago I met with a sad and severe blow in my private happiness, which led me to forswear, in the bitterness of my heart, any of those ties and affections which are but so many cords to bind us to sorrow and disappointment. In various matters, about that time, I had acted wrong; and I felt that a voluntary expatriation was a good atonement. When I went, therefore, I resolved never to return; and when, as I have said, twelve years ago, the longing to see friends and relations, and scenes that I once loved, seized me, I resisted, strengthened, in so doing, by a feeling that my return to England might be painful to some whom I did not desire to pain, and would only re-awaken, in my own bosom, feelings that had better sleep. Now, however, many other motives have been added to this longing, which returned upon me this spring with more force than ever. I wished eagerly to raise such a sum as would purchase a large tract of land on which to settle for ever, without danger of molestation, the remnant of a nearly-destroyed tribe of Indians, who, after having been massacred and ill-treated by every other white man they met with, at length attached themselves to me, and were living round me like my children, as you saw.'

'I did, indeed,' answered Manners; 'and I trust that you will let me aid in your noble design.'

'I do not know that it will be necessary now, for I am likely to take other measures,' answered Sir William. 'My own private income was not sufficient, though I had saved out of a thousand a year, which was all that I possessed, sufficient to lay a good foundation; but I also wished the British government to interfere for the more general and powerful protection of the Indians, and this was one reason of my coming. I longed, too, as I have said, to see many of my relations and friends; but I wished to do so privately. There were two persons, especially, of whom I was desirous of hearing more than I could in America. One,—over whom I hold some power, from various transactions in the past,—I wished to watch closely for a short time, and treat him according to his merits. The other,—who, though more independent of me, I could raise up or cast down as I pleased—I desired to sift thoroughly, to examine every trait in his character, to probe every feeling in his heart, with the resolution of leaving him, ultimately, to happiness, if I found him noble and true; but at the same time to give him a severe lesson, which might crush early some failings,—some peculiar evils in his disposition, that would, if suffered to remain, lead hereafter to misery, to himself and others. Various occurrences have taken place since, to alter or derange these plans; and, as we are from day to day the creatures of circumstances over which we have no control, I am now waiting for some decisive event to determine for me a line of conduct which I find some difficulty in determining for myself.'

'I am afraid, Sir William,' answered Manners, 'that even if I were to explain all this in your own words to Miss de Vaux, she would still be as much perplexed as ever; and I have often remarked, that in the minds of the timid—especially where there is real cause for uneasiness—everything that is doubtful and mysterious is interpreted into a fresh cause of apprehension and alarm. Besides, according to my contract with your acquaintance Pharold, and the stipulations which you have yourself implied, with regard to your name, so far from explaining all these motives, I am not even to disclose that I have seen you.'

Sir William Ryder paused for a moment or two in deep thought; and Manners, seeing that he was embarrassed, added, 'Perhaps, Sir William, the best way for me to act will be, to give Miss de Vaux a true account of the state of her cousin's health; to tell that I have seen him, but to add that, from particular causes, which I must explain hereafter, I can neither inform her where he is, nor enable her to see him. I have always found it best, wherever I have been embarrassed with any mystery of my own—which, thank God, has been seldom the case—I meet the matter at once, and say, *I will not tell*, without entangling myself in half explanations, which do me no good, and only serve those, whose curiosity or feelings are interested, as materials for imagination to build up visionary castles withal.'

'Perhaps you are right,' said Sir William: 'but stay yet a moment! A word or two more with our friend in the next room—I mean the gipsy—may decide my conduct.'

Manners smiled at the sort of counsellors by whom he had found his friend surrounded in both hemispheres. When first he met Sir William Ryder, he had seen him every day in

deep consultation with Indian chiefs; and now his principal reliance seemed to be upon gipsies; but, at present, that somewhat eccentric personage was disappointed in his purpose of calling Pharold to his councils; for when he opened the door, which led into a small neat study, with a table covered with papers, money, and lights in the midst thereof, he found the room untenanted by any living thing.

'I had forgot,' he said, turning back with a smile,—'I had forgot that one half hour in the air of a close room is too much for Pharold's endurance. He is gone, and I must send for him when I want him.'

'You seem to place more reliance on him,' said Manners, pointing to the heaps of gold and papers on the table, 'than most Englishmen would upon one of his race.'

'I would trust him, I may well say, with untold gold,' answered Sir William Ryder; 'as you would, Manners, if you knew him as I do. He has corresponded with me in America for twenty years; and one might be glad if, in the highest ranks, one could find so exact, so true, and so punctual a correspondent.' The reader, who has already received much information concerning things of which Manners was ignorant, may easily understand some of the motives of a correspondence between two persons so different in station. Manners, also, had by this time discovered that his friend's acquaintance with the gipsy was certainly not of yesterday; yet there was still sufficient matter, both new and strange, in what he heard, to make him not only feel surprised but look it also.

Sir William Ryder, however, who probably did not wish to give any further explanation, instantly led the conversation away, saying, 'But to return to what we were speaking of, Manners. I must soon come to some determination; and, perhaps, I have been weak in not forming one already: but there are spots of weakness in every one's heart, as there are spots of madness in every one's brain; and I have my share, of course, of both. However, I will limit myself to a time; and when you return to Morley House, you may tell the poor girl, that though it is judged expedient that she should not see her cousin to-morrow, yet on the next morning the old gentleman with whom he is—Mr. Harley, remember—will be very happy to receive her here, together with her aunt, as I suppose she will be afraid to venture on such an expedition alone. If,'—he added, 'if I should find reason to change my present purpose, I can but affect the barbarian, and be absent when the ladies come.'

'Such tidings will, indeed, give joy and peace,' answered Manners; 'but before I go to-morrow, I must take care to ascertain where your dwelling stands; for coming hither at night, and across the country, I am totally ignorant of everything concerning the spot where I now am, except that it is more than a hundred miles from London, which I found out by a mile-stone on the road.'

'We are in the environs of the little town of ——,' replied his companion, 'and, by the road, about seven miles from Morley House. I saw that this little place was to be let as I passed by one day, immediately after my return, and took it at once on various accounts, although I did not know how much it might prove of use to poor De Vaux. And now, Manners, to your rest; for, although I am a late watcher, you look fatigued, and are in need of repose.'

'I am somewhat fatigued,' answered Manners, 'although I have not had any very great cause; but the fact is, the mind is sometimes like a hard rider, and knocks up the body before it is aware. I have been all this morning either with Lord Dewry, examining a gipsy boy—taken last night in a sad deer-stealing affray at Dimden—in order to ascertain whether I could discover poor De Vaux, or pursuing somewhat fiercely your friend Pharold, against whom, by the way, warrants have been issued on three different charges.'

'On three charges, did you say?' demanded Sir William Ryder,—'on three! He only mentioned directly one charge against himself, that of having murdered this poor lad, which must now, of course, fall to the ground.'

'The other charges were,' answered Manners, 'first, that he had been engaged in the deer-stealing, wherein, I am sorry to say, blood was spilt; but in regard to that, I pointed out to him a means of proving his innocence. And, secondly, that many years ago he was either a principal or an accessory in the murder of the late Lord Dewry, who was killed by some unknown person at a spot not far from Morley House.'

It would be difficult to describe the effect that these few words produced upon the countenance of Sir William Ryder. His eye flashed, his brows contracted, and he bit his lip hard, till at length some feeling of contempt seemed to master the rest, and his emotion ended in a bitter and meaning laugh. 'And pray,' he asked, 'who is it that has brought this last charge against him?'

'None other than the brother of the murdered man, Lord Dewry,' answered Manners. 'He says he has proofs of the gipsy's guilt.'

'They have been long in manufacturing!' answered Sir William Ryder, sternly. 'I will tell you more, Manners: as there is a God of heaven, the gipsy is innocent, and he shall be proved so, let the bolt light where it may. Proofs! Out upon him! Falsehoods and villany! But he shall learn better, for I will not stand by and see the innocent oppressed for any remembrances that memory can call up.'

'You speak more harshly than ever I heard you, my dear Sir William,' answered Manners; 'but, perhaps, you have cause which I do not know of, and into which I certainly shall not pry. However, this nobleman is, as you know, De Vaux's father, and, ere we part for the night, you must tell me how I am to act towards him, for the gipsy stipulated that I was

to tell him nothing concerning his son's situation without your consent. May I tell him where De Vaux is, and under whose care?'

Sir William Ryder paused, and thought for several moments, with the same bitter smile which Manners's information had called up still hanging upon his lip. 'Yes,' he said at length, —'yes, you may tell him where his son is; and you may tell him to come and see him and me as speedily as he thinks fit. But call me still Mr. Harley, for there might be something unpleasant to his ears in the name of William Ryder which might prevent his coming. Say that Mr. Harley, the old gentleman to whose house De Vaux was conveyed after the accident he met with, will be happy to see him at any time he may name.'

'I am most delighted to have your permission to do so,' answered Manners; 'for, to tell the truth, it would have placed me in rather an awkward position in regard to Lord Dewry had you refused to let me give him full tidings of his son.'

'He will not much thank you,' said Sir William Ryder; 'but, nevertheless, let him come! Perhaps, after all, this is the best way we could have devised of bringing an unpleasant affair to an end.'

'I trust it may prove so,' answered Manners, 'and that the time may speedily come when you will find it not unpleasant to unravel all the mysteries which have been crowding lately so thick upon me, that I begin to feel confused amongst them, and hardly know who are friends and who are enemies.'

'Though I have the clue in my hands,' answered Sir William, pursuing more the direction of his own thoughts than that of Manners's last observation, 'there is one thing puzzles me as much as the rest seems to do you. It is that a youth, so full of high and noble feelings as Edward de Vaux, should be the son of such a man as his father; yet, thank God, he has many a goodly fault too, or I should begin to doubt that he were his son.'

'It not unfrequently happens,' rejoined Manners, 'that where the heart is originally good, the errors of the fathers serve as examples or as landmarks to the children, as the masts of some wrecked vessel often serve to warn mariners of the shoal on which she perished.'

'And *his* heart was originally good too, I do believe,' answered Sir William Ryder. 'I mean the father's,' he added, thoughtfully. 'Well, indeed, may his example serve to show to what, step by step, we may reduce ourselves, as one vice lashes on to another.'

Manners smiled. 'Nay, nay, Sir William,' he said, 'you are doing the worthy lord somewhat less than justice, I think. I never heard of his being troubled with any of what the world calls vices. Pride, indeed, and wrath, and irascibility he is not without; but, setting aside these gentlemanly peccadilloes, I never heard of any vices.'

'That is all!' cried Sir William Ryder, starting up, and laying his hand upon Manners's arm, while he fixed his eyes intently upon him. But suddenly breaking off, he resumed a calmer look and tone, and added, 'But we have not time to-night to discuss characters. I am but keeping you from your rest.'

Manners did not endeavour to carry on the conversation; for, in all such matters, it was his rule to let people go on just as far as they liked, but to press them no farther; and although he certainly was not without some feeling of curiosity in regard to the connection between Sir William Ryder and the father of his friend De Vaux, yet he well knew that the only way to come honestly at a secret is to be totally careless about it. The bell was now rung, and Manners was conducted to a room, which the servant who had given him admission, and who was an old acquaintance, had with laudable foresight prepared for his use, looking upon it as certain that a visitor who arrived at twelve o'clock at night was not likely to depart before the next morning.

Everything had been carefully provided that he could want or desire; and Colonel Manners, who enjoyed, perhaps, more than most men, that inestimable blessing of a heart at ease in itself, lay down to rest, and was soon in a deep slumber.

His repose was not disturbed till the grey of the next morning, when he was roused with the intelligence that Captain de Vaux was awake, and would be very glad to see him. He was not long in obeying the summons; and, after a soldier's toilet hastily made, he rang for the servant, and was conducted to the apartment where his wounded friend lay.

In the small dressing-room, through which Manners was conducted to the chamber of his friend, he found a surgeon who had been brought from London, and who had passed the preceding night in close attendance upon the patient. He was luckily one of those men who can form an opinion, and will venture to speak it; and in answer to Colonel Manners's inquiries respecting De Vaux's real situation, he replied at once, 'There is no danger, sir. He will do perfectly well. I should advise, however, as little conversation as possible, and that of as cheerful a kind as may be, for it may retard recovery, if it do not produce more serious evil.'

Manners promised to observe his caution, and entered the room. De Vaux smiled faintly when he saw him, and held out his hand, though he moved with evident pain.

'This is a sad accident, indeed, De Vaux,' said Manners, sitting down by his bedside; 'but I am delighted to hear from the surgeon that it is likely to have no bad consequences, and to be speedily remedied.'

'I should be ungrateful to say that I am sorry he thinks so,' answered De Vaux, in a melancholy tone; 'and yet I can hardly make up my mind to rejoice.'

'Nay, nay,' said Manners, 'I will not hear

you say so, my friend. You can have heard no tidings, you can be placed in no situation, De Vaux, which should make you forget that you are surrounded by people who love you for yourself, and are worthy of your love—who would love you still, under all or any circumstances—that you have friends, relations, ties of every dear and intimate character that can make health and life a blessing, if you are willing to receive it as such. Nor should you forget that there are others who may well be dear to your heart, and whose whole happiness for life is staked upon yours.'

'Oh, yes, poor Marian,' said De Vaux. 'I am, indeed, ungrateful, for such a treasure as that should compensate for everything. But tell me how she is. Tell me all about her, Manners. When did she hear of this accident? and how has she borne it?'

Manners, though it can scarcely be said that he was puzzled how to answer, yet felt that, with a man of De Vaux's character, it was somewhat a delicate task, especially as, from what the surgeon had said, it might be expedient not to tell his friend the full extent of what Marian had suffered. He was too well aware of De Vaux's fastidiousness not to let him know that Marian had felt as deeply on his account as he could possibly think she ought to have done; and yet Manners did not wish to pain and alarm him by telling him how much she really had undergone.

'You ask me to tell you a long story, De Vaux,' he answered, after a moment's thought, 'longer, I am afraid, than your worthy surgeon will consent to your hearing at present; but the truth is, in consequence of some other accident or mistake, we never did hear of what had occurred to you at all.'

'Good God!' cried De Vaux, 'when with my own hand I wrote to Marian as much as I could write. I do think that servants and messengers were made for the very purpose of breaking people's hearts, or teasing them to death by carelessness.'

'In this instance, however,' said Manners, 'it seems that there were various causes which prevented the delivery of your note; and the consequence was that, from your unexplained absence, and several other accidental facts which came to our knowledge, we were led to conclude that you had been murdered. I, of course, instantly took arms to avenge you, as in duty bound, and, backed by warrants and gentlemen of the quorum, I have been galloping about the country ever since; so that, in fact, I have seen scarcely anything of the family at Morley House, and less than all of your fair cousin Miss de Vaux, whose very first apprehensions rendered her so unwell, that she has kept her room almost ever since.'

'Good God!' cried De Vaux: 'how she must have suffered! Poor dear Marian! Would to God that I could go to her—but I am afraid that I could not ride.'

'Ride! Do not think of it for an instant,' cried Manners, 'and make yourself easy about Miss de Vaux. Last night I, for the first time, obtained news of your safety, which did her more good than all that the god of medicine himself could have done. Nay, I do believe that she would have walked over here with me in the middle of last night, if it had not been that her own ideas of propriety, or, perhaps, her fears of your notions thereof, prevented her from undertaking such a task under such an escort.'

De Vaux smiled. 'You are severe upon my fastidiousness, Manners,' he said; 'but that is one bad quality which, I trust, I shall be able to cast away with many others. I have had some hard lessons lately, Manners, enough to bow down the pride of him of the morning star; and, perhaps, I may have more yet to undergo: but, at all events, my vain fastidiousness is gone for ever; so that one good is gained by misfortune.'

'As it often is, my friend,' answered Manners: 'nevertheless, I think Miss de Vaux was very right to stay where she was; especially as she herself was far from strong, and I did not know whither I was about to go; for my friend the gipsy, who conducted me hither, is a man of mysteries. However, you owe him thanks for one service that he has rendered to another fair cousin of yours, Miss Falkland, whom he saved from drowning, at the risk of his own life.'

De Vaux had drawn his hand over his eyes, when first Manners mentioned the gipsy; but he removed it again, and looked up with pleasure at the tidings of Isadore's escape, though he asked no account of the accident. 'Poor Isadore,' he said, 'and poor Marian, too, for God knows what we may both be called upon to suffer. Manners, my brain is in such a whirl, with various doubts and fears and anxieties, which I can neither explain to others or unravel myself, that I must, indeed, endeavour to banish all thought of my own situation, and of my future prospects, if I wish to recover.'

'Well, then, by all means banish all thought,' answered Manners. 'It is seldom that I can be accused of giving such advice; but for a man in your situation, I think it absolutely a duty to cast from him every memory, and every reflection, which may tend to impede his recovery, trusting and believing that, in those circumstances where we have no power to deliver ourselves, the Almighty Disposer of all things will act for us far better than we could act for ourselves.'

'I must e'en think so,' answered De Vaux, in whom corporeal weakness and exhaustion had deadened the first sense of misfortune. 'Sir William Ryder, indeed, bids me hope, and tells me that things must and will go better than I anticipate; but we speak to each other in enigmas; and till my mind and body are capable of clearer thought and greater exertion I must, I suppose, rest satisfied with assurances,

the foundation for which I can in no degree perceive.'

Manners, now anxious to lead his thoughts away from any more painful subject, gave him a brief, light sketch of his own proceeding in search of him and all that had occurred since he had left Morley House; but, warned by what had already passed concerning the gipsy, he kept a watchful and friendly eye upon the countenance of his friend, skilfully turning to some other part of the same subject as soon as he perceived that what he said was beginning to produce the slightest uneasiness. He was surprised to find, however, on how many points De Vaux was susceptible of pain. The mention of his own father affected him as strongly as the mention of the gipsy; and many a casual word, which seemed in itself to be innocent or kind, made him shrink as if some one had laid a rough hand upon his wound. Beginning at length to fear that his conversation was doing his friend more harm than good, Manners rose, adding, 'And now, my dear De Vaux, I think I have remained as long with you as friendship can require, or gallantry permit, considering that there is a fair lady, very dear to you, watching anxiously till I shall return and tell her that I have seen you with my own eyes, and that you are living, not dead; recovering, not dying. The good people here, for various reasons, will not hear of her coming to you to-day, but they assure me that to-morrow you will be able to see her: so that I think I can then promise you a visit; and hope to find that you have in the interval regained much of the health and strength that you have lost.'

'I will not ask you to stay longer, Manners,' said De Vaux; 'for I am too confident of my dear Marian's affection not to feel sure that the tidings of my probable recovery will be the best consolation she can receive; and tell her, Manners, I beg, that the only happiness I anticipate in life and health is that of seeing her again.'

'I will tell her how happy it will make you,' answered Manners; 'but without any of the melancholy adjuncts, if you please, De Vaux. I will not spoil the best tidings I have had to tell for some time, by such a number of unpleasant negatives as you attach to them; and so fare you well for the present.'

'Manners, Manners,' said the voice of De Vaux, ere his friend reached the door, 'there is one thing which I had forgot. Do not on any account let Marian think that this wound which I have received was the consequence of any intentional act of my own hand. Bid her be sure that, whatever may have occurred, I was not fool enough, or cruel enough to her, to think of such a thing. Explain to her the accident as I dare say you must have heard it, and tell her that, though they say the pistol must have been cocked when I put it in my bosom, I have not the slightest remembrance of its having been so.'

'I will tell her all,' answered Manners; 'but do not fancy that she will ever dream that you did do it intentionally. If you were a forlorn and solitary being like myself, destined to go through life in single unblessedness, people might suspect you; but with so many ties at present, and so much happiness to look forward to, you would be worse than a madman to throw away not only the crown of life, but all the jewels with which fate has adorned it for you.'

De Vaux gave him a melancholy look, but only added, 'You do not know all, Manners!' and suffered him to depart. As he was crossing the hall in search of some one who could inform him whether Sir William Ryder was yet awake, he met the object of his search, booted and spurred, as if returned from riding. 'You keep your old habits, I see, Sir William,' said Manners, as they met. 'You must have been up and out full early, indeed.'

'Mr. Harley; remember, my dear Colonel, Mr. Harley I am for the present,' replied the other. 'I never sleep before one, nor after five—a habit which was acquired in sorrow and in bitterness, but which I would not now lose for half an empire. But have you seen our poor friend?'

'Yes, I have,' answered Manners; 'and find him better in body, at least, than I had even hoped. In mind, however, he is very much depressed; and without inquiring, or wishing to inquire, my dear sir, into the connection which may exist between your affairs and his, allow me to say, as some connection does certainly exist, that I am sure whatever will soothe and quiet his mind will tend more than anything to restore him to health. I hope that I do not take too great a liberty with your friendship,' he added, seeing a cloud come upon his auditor's brow.

'Not in the least, Manners,' answered Sir William; 'I was only thinking what I could do to relieve the poor youth's mind. I am afraid I somewhat mistook him, Manners, when I saw him with you in America; I am afraid I did not half see the nobler and finer qualities of his mind, concealed, as they were, under an exterior of frivolous fastidiousness. But I can assure you, that anything on earth I can do to set his mind at ease, I will do; and I will go and assure him thereof directly and solemnly.'

Manners detained him for a single moment to borrow a horse, and to explain the motives of his early departure for Morley House; and then suffering him to proceed, in order to soothe and calm the mind of his wounded friend, he himself took his way to Mrs. Falkland's, glad to bear good tidings to those who stood so much in need of them.

Marian was watching at the window as he galloped up; and there was something in the rapid pace at which he came, in the light and agile motion with which he sprang to the ground, and flung the rein to the servant, which spoke joyful tidings. Manners was soon in the drawing-room; and the news he bore was not long

in telling. He related all that he had seen, and all that he had heard of her cousin's accident and situation; and although we cannot deny that he softened a little the pain he suffered, and the grief which seemed to oppress him, Manners told her the truth, though he told it kindly.

Marian's face was alternately the abode of smiles and tears, during his narrative, and during the manifold answers which he gave to her questions; and again and again she thanked him for all his energetic interest and feeling kindness, and prayed Heaven sincerely that De Vaux and herself might have some opportunity of returning it as he deserved.

Manners only interrupted a conversation which was not without interest to himself, and was so deeply interesting to her, in order to inquire for her cousin, and to put many a question concerning Miss Falkland's health, after the accident of the preceding night. He was still in full career, when she herself entered, somewhat paler but not less gay than ever; and although she declared, and persisted in the declaration, that she was bound by every rule of propriety to fall in love with the gipsy who had rescued her, and to tender him her hand and heart, Manners felt sincerely rejoiced that Pharold had been the person to come so opportunely to her aid. Isadore, indeed, as she recollected one or two words which had been spoken on the preceding evening, coloured more than once when Manners addressed her; but she knew him to be a generous man, and she determined to trust to his generosity for the result.

Mrs. Falkland soon after joined the party; and the house of mourning was changed into a house of joy. Nothing more remained but to write to Lord Dewry, informing him of his son's safety; and this Manners undertook and executed, keeping in mind the engagement he had come under to Sir William Ryder, regarding the concealment of his name. A servant was instantly despatched to Dewry Hall with the note; but on reaching that place he found that the peer had returned early that morning to Dimden, and thither he then bent his steps; but arrived too late to give Lord Dewry even the option of visiting his son that night.

CHAPTER XXV.

SIR ROGER MILLINGTON'S WOUND.

DIMDEN PARK—a spot which had been hated and avoided by Lord Dewry ever since it fell into his possession, on account of its many memories—some painful in themselves, some painful in their associations—had, by this time, not alone been re-visited by its master, but had been occupied by him, with a part of his general household, as if for the purpose of longer residence. Such a state of things had been in no degree contemplated by the peer, either when Manners left him, or when he himself terminated his conversation with the gipsy boy who had become his prisoner; but another conversation had succeeded with another person to whose chamber we must now follow.

The first object of Lord Dewry being to get the gipsy, Pharold, into his power—trusting to his previously arranged schemes to work his will with him when he had him there—it was natural that he should turn his whole efforts to accomplish his capture before he attended to anything else. The moment, however, that all the means had been employed for that purpose, which circumstances permitted, his attention instantly returned to the plans which he had concerted in order to prove the object of his hatred and his fear guilty of the crime imputed to him, when he should be ultimately taken. The execution of these plans materially depended upon Sir Roger Millington; and for his safety and recovery the peer's next aspirations were consequently raised. As soon, then, as he had dismissed the affair of the boy, and had seen the treacherous scoundrel he thought fit to employ for the purpose of inveigling the gipsy to his destruction, set out upon his errand, Lord Dewry turned his steps towards the chamber of the wounded man, sincerely grieved for the accident which had happened to him, and most anxious concerning its ultimate result. Calculating, however, with nice acumen, the irritable selfishness of sick people, he trusted not to the personal vexation which he really felt to give his air and countenance the appearance of grief and sympathy: but as he walked slowly up the stairs, he thought over every point of the part he was to play, in order to cover his individual motives from the eye of the wounded man, and make him believe that sincere interest in his fate and sufferings was the sole emotion which affected his friend and benefactor.

At the door of the chamber to which Sir Roger had been conveyed the peer paused for a moment; and then laying his hand upon the lock, turned it, and entered with as noiseless a step as possible. The windows were darkened; but there was still enough light in the room for the eye to distinguish the table covered with surgical instruments and bloody bandages, and all those appliances and means for saving life which man so strangely combines with the most skilful and persevering activity in taking it. There was the bed, too, and the half-drawn curtains, and the gentleman in black, sitting by the bolster, while a young prim assistant walked about on tiptoe for the soothing dose or the cooling drink. A deep groan was sounding through the room as the peer entered; and although he was, and always had been, a man of nerve, without any corporeal terror at the thought either of pain or of death, there was something in that sound, and all the accessary circumstances around, that made a sort of shudder pass over his frame.

He advanced lightly towards the bed, and stood by the chair, whence the surgeon rose as

he approached, ere the wounded man was aware of his presence. Sir Roger Millington was lying on his left side, with his face turned away, and his right hand cast over the bedclothes; and it was not difficult, from the slow clenching of his hand, and the rocking motion of his head, to see the intense agony he suffered. The peer paused, and gazed for a moment with some emotion—not, indeed, without a mingling of better feelings—compassion, and sympathy, and disinterested grief, such as he had not known for many years. It was better than all the acting in the world; and when Sir Roger, whom no persuasion of the surgeon could induce to lie still, turned round with the quick and irritable movement of high fever and excessive pain, he saw the peer standing by him with an expression of sincere sorrow which could not be mistaken.

A groan and a fearful contortion followed the change of position; but when the first agony was over, he looked pleased to see the countenance of Lord Dewry; and said in a voice wonderfully strong and firm, considering his situation, 'Your lordship is very kind—I am badly hurt, I am afraid—those accursed gipsies took too good an aim. D—— me, if I do not think the shot must have been red hot, it gives one such torture. I have been wounded before, but never felt anything like this. Do you think I shall die, my lord, ey?'

'Heaven forbid,' cried the peer, sitting down. 'On the contrary, I trust the very pain you suffer evinces that you are in no danger; for I have always heard that mortal wounds are generally the least painful. Is it not so, Mr. Swainstone?'

'Yes, exactly so, my lord,' replied the surgeon, who would probably have confirmed anything on earth that the peer said to soothe his patient. 'I had told the gentleman so before your lordship arrived.'

'You never told me so,' cried Sir Roger, looking up at him angrily.

'Yes, indeed, sir, I told you that I hoped and trusted you would recover,' answered the surgeon; 'and one of my reasons for thinking so was the very pain you suffer; for, as his lordship very justly and wisely observes, wounds which——'

'But that d—— parson,' cried Sir Roger, 'told me I should certainly die—a foul-mouthed, old, hooded crow!'

'What parson?' demanded the peer, in some surprise and dismay at the very idea of Sir Roger Millington being brought in contact in his dying hours with any one who might lead him on to dangerous disclosures,—'what parson does he mean?'

'Oh, only good Dr. Edwards, my lord, the rector,' answered the surgeon. 'He came to give the gentleman religious consolation; but he did not exactly say that he would certainly die. He said that he would certainly die at some time; and that even if he were spared at present, it would be better for him to turn his thoughts to serious things, so that if he recovered, the wound might prove salutary to his mind at least.'

'Yes, yes; but he thought, and he meant me to think, too,' cried Sir Roger, 'that I was dying, and that I could not recover. I knew well enough what he meant—the canting old crow; but I'll live, curse me if I do not, if it be but to pay those hellish gipsies for this torture to which they have put me. I beg your pardon, my lord, for being somewhat violent; but I am in agony, perfect agony.'

'I grieve most deeply and sincerely, my dear friend, to see you suffer so much,' answered the peer; 'and I will take care that no such fanatical irritation be intruded upon you again. Dr. Edwards is a very good and well-intentioned man, I daresay; but I will not have a sick and wounded friend tormented for any rector on the face of the earth. In the meantime, however, I trust that this state of anguish is not likely to be of long endurance. What do you think, Mr. Swainstone? Can nothing be done to alleviate it?'

'I have done as much as I could, my lord, to effect that purpose,' answered the surgeon, with a very significant shrug of the shoulders; 'and I doubt not, in a few hours, the gentleman will feel the pain begin to subside.'

'That is the best news I have heard from you yet, doctor,' said the wounded man. 'But do you not think you can extract the ball? I do not believe I shall be easier as long as that remains in me, burning like a coal.'

'O yes, you will,' answered the surgeon; 'and it is necessary to let the first irritation subside, before I make the attempt again. Were I to try it now, it might increase all you suffer, and prolong it, perhaps, for many hours.'

'Then you shall not touch it, depend upon that,' cried Sir Roger; 'I suffer quite enough already.'

'In the mean time, Mr. Swainstone,' demanded the peer, 'let me inquire whether a little quiet conversation with a friend is likely to injure your patient; or I would even deny myself the pleasure of remaining with him, though I much desire it, if you thought it would prove in any degree hurtful.'

'Not in the least, my lord,' answered the surgeon; 'a little cheerful and interesting conversation, such as your lordship's must always be, would, most likely, withdraw his mind from himself, and rather do him good than otherwise.'

'Then I will relieve you in your attendance upon him for half an hour,' rejoined the peer; 'and your assistant can wait in the next room, in case Sir Roger may want any surgical aid. But, remember,' he added, in a louder tone, 'in case I do not see you again, I beseech you to give your whole time and attention up to my friend here, and shall esteem it the greatest favour that any one can confer upon me, if you bring him safely, and speedily, through this unfortunate affair.'

The surgeon bowed; and promising to do his best, proceeded to quit the apartment with his assistant. The peer then, suddenly seeming to remember something, followed into the anteroom, and, closing the door, beckoned him back. 'I wish to know, Mr. Swainstone,' he said, in a low but emphatic tone, 'your real opinion of my friend's case. You said just now that the pain would subside in a few hours; do you think that likely to be really the case? for I see that you have spoken under some restraint.'

'It will certainly be the case, my lord,' replied the surgeon, gravely; 'but only from the coming on of mortification, which cannot be long ere it occurs.'

'Good God! then you think he will die!' cried the peer in real alarm.

'I do think so, my lord,' answered the surgeon, 'without there existing in my mind one hope of being able to prevent it. The fact is this, my lord: the ball entered his right side; and passing directly through the muscles of the back, was only stopped by the articulations of the ribs and the vertebræ, both of which have been so much fractured and injured, that there is neither any possibility of extracting the ball, nor any chance of its remaining there innocuous, as is sometimes the case.'

'Then how long do you think life may be protracted?' asked the peer, anxiously.

'It is impossible to say to a day or two, my lord,' answered the surgeon. 'It may be over in a week; and, on the contrary, he may linger ten days or a fortnight.'

'Then you do not think that there is any chance of immediate dissolution?' demanded Lord Dewry.

'None whatever, my lord,' replied the surgeon. 'All hemorrhage has ceased long. First, mortification will ensue, and then——'

'Spare me the description,' said the peer; 'but tell me, in case of its being necessary to transact any business of importance with this unfortunate gentleman, when do you think will be the moment in which it can best be done?'

'Why, I should say, in the beginning of the mortification,' the surgeon replied. 'All his faculties will be clear and active, and the great bodily pain which he is now suffering will have abated.'

'Well then, Mr. Swainstone,' rejoined Lord Dewry, 'I shall trust to you to give me notice of the precise moment at which you judge it expedient that this poor gentleman's declaration, on oath, regarding the transactions in which he has suffered, should be taken down. At the same time, let me caution you not to alarm him, or suffer him to be alarmed, by the thought of death; but keep his spirits up, as far as possible, till it shall become absolutely necessary to let him know that all hope is past.'

Thus saying, the peer returned into the room of the wounded man; and the surgeon withdrew, wondering who Sir Roger Millington could be, towards whom the cold and proud Lord Dewry displayed so much courtesy and warm regard.

The peer, in the mean time, approached the bed of the sufferer with a more cheerful countenance; and assured him in answer to some rather anxious questions, that the real opinion of the surgeon was more favourable than he had even expected. 'I have given orders, too,' added Lord Dewry, 'that no more fanatics be admitted to you. There are a crowd of those weak fools about the country, who haunt sick rooms; and very often, by depressing the mind and spirits, cause those persons to die who would otherwise have recovered.'

'Oh, I'll not die for any of them,' answered Sir Roger; 'I'll live to have revenge on those gipsies. They marked me out especially; and I will live long enough to show that, though I was so badly hurt, I could mark them too, and remember them to their cost.'

'Did you see Pharold, then, amongst them?' demanded the peer, eagerly. 'Was it he who fired the shot?'

'I saw Pharold plainly,' answered Sir Roger; 'and can swear that he was amongst them. So can the man that held me up in his arms, after I was wounded; for he pointed him out to me, and I will swear to him anywhere.'

Joy glistened in the eyes of the peer while he listened. He had had doubts, he had had apprehensions, lest the testimony of his keeper against the gipsy should remain unsupported by other authority; and he had not left unremarked Harvey's implication that some of the other persons present differed with him in their account of the affair. But the assertion of Sir Roger Millington was conclusive; as he well knew from his own former experience as a lawyer, what an effect the dying declaration of a murdered person always has upon a jury.

He now felt armed at all points. By the transactions of the preceding day he could prove the impossibility of his having committed the crime which he believed that Pharold would cast back in his teeth; and from the events of the preceding night he felt secure, that if the gipsy should even be cleared of the murder of his brother and of his son, the last charge, in regard to the violence in Dimden Park, would be made good against him, and lay his dangerous lips in the silence of the grave. But in his eagerness to secure this advantage beyond the power of fate, Lord Dewry somewhat outran discretion. Without giving either himself or Sir Roger time to pause, he exclaimed, eagerly, 'Will it not be better, my dear Sir Roger, at once to make a declaration, upon oath, of your recollections concerning the affair of last night?'

Sir Roger Millington looked at him suspiciously. 'Do you think me dying, or do you not, Lord Dewry?' he demanded; 'for if I am not dying, but likely to recover, I shall have plenty of time to make the declaration when I am not in such pain, or give the *vivâ voce* evidence, which is much better in a court

of justice. So let me know the truth, my lord.'

Lord Dewry saw that it was in vain to hope he would make the declaration he desired unless he believed himself to be dying; but the peer had a keen knowledge of human nature, and saw all the dangers which would attend the disclosure of his real state to Sir Roger Millington. He knew that men who have confronted the chance of death a thousand times, and, if one may use the expression, have bearded 'the lean, abhorred monster' in his most angry moods, will wreathe and flutter like a scared bird when he has got them in his inevitable grasp, and when they know that they cannot escape. He knew that these are the moments 'that make cowards of us all;' and he feared lest some lingering notions of crime, and repentance, and another world, should tempt Sir Roger Millington to an endeavour towards atoning past errors, by the confession of all those evil designs which were still in their passage between the past and the future, between the revocable and the irretrievable; and he would not have risked the chance for a world.

'God forbid, my dear Millington,' he said, 'that anything should be even likely to prevent your giving evidence when the trial of these gipsies comes on; but my only reason for wishing you to make the declaration was, that it might be produced at once before the magistrates, whom I shall request to meet here to-morrow or the day after, either to take measures for pursuing the villains vigorously, if they have not been arrested before that time, or to investigate the matter if they have, which I trust may be the case, as I have already set half the county on their track. Now what I wish is, that this Pharold may be committed directly; and you know that amongst a number of country magistrates there is always some prating, troublesome fellow, who throws difficulties in the way; and in this instance, it must be remembered, some of the people did not recognise Pharold, so that your evidence is of vital importance.'

'Let them come to me,' said Sir Roger, vehemently,—'and I will give such evidence as would hang him half a dozen times over. I should like to be but a quarter of an hour in the same room with the scoundrel with two good small swords. Only to think, my lord, of me—who have made the daylight shine through many a pretty man as one would wish to see—being hurt in this way by a stinking yellow fox of a gipsy, that is only fit to be hunted down by a good pack of hounds!'

'I trust we shall catch him,' said the peer, who saw that it was vain to press the wounded man any farther upon the subject of the declaration.

'Catch him!' cried Sir Roger, who was working himself up into a state of vehement excitement,—'catch him! you cannot miss catching him, if you take proper means. By Jupiter, if you miss him, I'll undertake, for a small sum, to catch him myself as soon as I am well; or rather, I should say, catch the whole of them, for curse me if I know which of them it was that fired the shot.'

'Indeed!' cried Lord Dewry; 'I am sorry for that; I thought you were certain it was Pharold.'

'I dare say it was,' answered the knight, 'for I saw him standing in front, when they picked me up. It was either he himself or a young fellow who stood near, and who bullied a great deal before hand. But as those that bully never act, I dare say it was Pharold himself.'

'I wish to Heaven your recollection would enable you to swear that it was Pharold,' said the peer in a low but distinct voice.

'Oh, I can swear that it was he who did it, to the best of my belief,' answered Sir Roger, who, notwithstanding all his sufferings, could not but feel, that, in the peer, he had obtained a friend, whom it might be inexpedient to lose, and whose care and attention, under his existing circumstances, might well make some impression upon him, although he even did doubt the motives which produced such conduct,—'I can swear it was he who did it, to the best of my belief,' he repeated, with some emphasis on the last words; and then added in the peevish tone of pain, 'You seem to have a goodly dislike towards this Pharold, my lord.'

'I have good cause to hate him,' Lord Dewry said, bending down over the wounded man with the expression of all his dark and bitter feelings frowning unrestrained upon his brow. 'Judge if I have not, when I tell you that his hand has not only been dipped in my brother's blood, but also in the blood of my only son.'

He spoke in a low and agitated voice, but Sir Roger caught his meaning distinctly; and, with an involuntary movement of real horror, started up upon his elbow. He fell back again instantly, with a groan of agony, and the big drops rolled from his forehead. The peer paused for a few minutes, seeing that the sudden movement had renewed all the sufferings of the wounded man; but he had yet much more to say, and when the knight had in some degree recovered, he began again with expressions of sympathy and kindness. 'I am sorry to see you suffer so terribly,' he said; 'you seemed easier just now, and I was in hopes that the change for the better, which the surgeon prognosticated, was already coming on.'

'I was better,' said the knight, peevishly, 'but that cursed start that you made me give, by telling me about your son, has torn me all to pieces again. You should not tell one such things so hastily.'

'Were my son out of the question,' replied Lord Dewry, with every appearance of frankness and sincerity, 'had this Pharold never shed one drop of my kindred blood, I would pursue him and his tribe to the last man for what they have made you suffer.'

There is no calculating, however, the turns which the irritability of sickness will take; and

whether Lord Dewry overcharged the expression of his regard or not, Sir Roger murmured to himself, in a tone too indistinct for the peer to distinguish his words, 'I daresay you think so, now that you have your own purposes to answer too. I am not to be blinded. Well, my lord,' he continued aloud, somewhat apprehensive, perhaps, that the peer's present kindness might render him the obliged person, instead of the conferrer of the obligation, and thus deprive him of many a profitable claim for the future,—'well, my lord, I am very much obliged to you for your kindness, but I trust you will not allow my having suffered in an attempt to serve you, so greatly as to render me for the time incapable of doing all that I could wish,—I hope that you will not allow this fact, I say, to alter your lordship's kind intentions in my favour.'

The peer understood very clearly, although Sir Roger was rendered peevish and somewhat imprudent by pain and sickness, yet that with habitual rapacity he now wished to tie him down to the fulfilment of all that had been promised on the former evening, lest the opportunity should slip, and the gipsy be convicted of other crimes by other means. Confiding, however, in the assurance of the surgeon, that the unhappy knight must die, he felt that he could be liberal as the air in promises, without any dangerous result, and he therefore replied at once, 'Fear not, Sir Roger; not only will I do all that I said, when you were first kind enough to give me your assistance, but it shall not be my fault if I do not find means to do more. Set your mind, therefore, at ease upon the subject, and do not allow any thoughts for the future to give you apprehension, or delay your recovery. Since, however, you have spoken of the subject yourself, there are some things in those papers which we were looking over last night which I should much like to see again. Have you them here?'

Sir Roger, however, was not to be deceived; and his present views were directly opposed to those which he perceived or suspected in his noble companion. In the first arrangement of the affair, indeed, when he had been suddenly raised from apprehensions of the most gnawing want to hopes of competence and ease, when he believed that the peer could not ultimately act without him, and that he had it always in his power to enforce, by a few gentle hints of publicity, the performance of all that had been promised, he would have given the papers out of his own hands without fear. Under those circumstances, too, the peer had thought it better that the knight should keep them, that their production might take place more naturally.

Now, however, the position of each was changed. Lord Dewry looked upon Sir Roger as a dying man, whose life could not be protracted to the completion of all they designed, and who might be worked upon by the fear of death, or the irritability of sickness, to take a very different view of the life he was leaving from that which he had hitherto entertained. Sir Roger, on his part, saw that, tied down to a bed of pain, through a long and tedious convalescence, no opportunity could possibly be afforded him of superintending and directing the proceeding in which he had been engaged, and, therefore, that his great hold upon the peer was to be found in the papers which they had altered together. Both, therefore, wished to possess them; and Sir Roger, in the apparently casual question of Lord Dewry, perceived at once the object he proposed. 'No, my lord,' he answered, somewhat abruptly, 'I have them not with me. I left them at your house at Dewry Hall. I wish to God I had them with me.'

The peer was somewhat startled by the eagerness of his tone, for it is impossible for men to confederate in villany without being more or less suspicious of each other. 'Cannot I find them for you, Sir Roger?' he demanded. 'If you will intrust me with the key of your valise, I will bring them over with me to-morrow.'

A grim smile checkered the expression of pain on the countenance of the wounded man, and he replied, 'Your lordship is very good: but, as I shall require a number of things contained in my valise, I think it would be better if your lordship were to have the goodness to order some of your servants to send me over everything which I left in the apartment assigned me at Dewry Hall.'

'Certainly, certainly,' answered the peer, who saw that he must press the matter no farther,—'certainly, it shall be done this very night. But do you not think, Sir Roger,' he continued, with renewed apprehension lest the unhappy man, if left unwatched by his own eye, should discover his real situation, and be persuaded to make inconvenient confessions,—'do you not think, Sir Roger, that you yourself might bear removal to the hall? I do not like your remaining in this damp old house, which has not been inhabited for many years, and in which there is but little that can render you comfortable during your convalescence. If you could bear the motion——'

'Impossible, my lord,' replied Sir Roger, sharply. 'I wonder you do not see that I can bear no motion at all. This place will do very well; I have lain in worse quarters; and if you will order my valise to be sent, it is all I want. To tell the truth,' he added, 'I am somewhat tired, and am afraid that to speak much more would injure me.'

'Then far be it from me, replied the peer, 'to prolong our conversation, Sir Roger. I shall take care that everything that circumstances admit be done for your accommodation, and that you be not again teased by our fanatical rector as you were this morning.'

There was a degree of anger in his tone which, had it not been repressed by many a potent consideration, might have flashed forth

in a very different manner; but it was still sufficiently perceptible to make the wounded man add some deprecatory sentences, which the peer received in good part, and left the room. As soon as he was gone, Sir Roger Millington placed his hand over his eyes, and gave way to thoughts of a very mixed, but all of a melancholy character.

'His compassion and his regard,' he thought, his mind turning to the crafty man who had just left him, 'are all false and affected, that is clear enough. To think of his wishing to move me fourteen or fifteen miles in this terrible state! I should like to know what his object is. He has some deep object, beyond doubt. Can he be afraid of my betraying him? Perhaps he may. His schemes are villanous ones enough, that is certain; but he knows that if I were to peach, I should lose the annuity from him, and get nothing from any one else; so he cannot be afraid of that.' Then came a long interval of confused and rambling speculations on the motives of the peer, which had something of delirium in their vague and unconnected whirl.

In the meanwhile, the peer, after leaving such directions as the circumstances and his own particular plans required, placed himself once more in his carriage, and returned to his usual abode; but he determined that on no consideration should the wounded man be left longer in Dimden House without his presence.

Again and again, as the carriage rolled on, he revolved in his own mind the various means that could be used to induce the dying man to make such a declaration of what he had witnessed during the affray in Dimden Park as would give an irresistible grasp of Pharold; and yet how to accomplish this purpose without letting Sir Roger know that he was dying, and that the crimes to which he was making himself a party would soon appear in the dreadful account against his disembodied spirit? It was a difficult task, and yet he thought he could accomplish it, if he were for any long time present in the knight's sick room; but, on another point, he saw, and saw with a glow of triumph, that he could turn the very refusal of the papers, which for a moment he had considered as detrimental, to the very best account.

Although it was late, and he had not dined, yet he ordered the carriage, ere it proceeded home, to pass through the neighbouring village, and stop at the vicarage. It was an honour which the proud, cold, irreverent peer had seldom paid to the poor minister of a religion that condemned him; and with some surprise the vicar beheld him enter his little study. But now Lord Dewry was anxious to buy golden opinions from all sorts of men; and although he had a farther purpose at present in view, he addressed the clergyman with that sort of courtesy, which his situation prompted him to use towards every one whose word might be of value in the opinion of the world.

'My dear sir,' he said, 'I come to you for the purpose of requesting a favour.' The vicar, who neither loved nor approved the man who spoke to him, answered coldly that he should be happy to do anything to serve his Lordship; and the peer proceeded to explain.

'The fact is,' he said, 'that last night, in a terrible deer-stealing affray, which took place at Dimden, a poor friend of mine was severely wounded, and is not expected to live from hour to hour. Amongst his baggage, which remains here at the hall, he tells me that there are papers of great importance; and, indeed, he wished me to bring them to him: but as his mind is not itself, and his faculties wander from time to time, I do not conceive I should be justified in placing papers of importance at his disposal. At the same time, of course, I cannot presume to examine them, and I wish much to seal them up in your presence, if you have time to get into my carriage with me, and accompany me to the hall. It is for this purpose that I have now called here as I passed from Dimden on my way home.'

The vicar thought that the matter might have been more simply arranged: but as there was nothing in the peer's request which was unreasonable, he consented to accompany him; and in a few minutes they were at the door of the mansion. Leaving the cook to fret over his delayed ragouts, the peer instantly ordered sealing-wax and lights to be brought; and, accompanied by the clergyman, proceeded to the apartments which Sir Roger Millington had occupied for so short a time, and in which various articles of apparel were still lying about. The valise, however, firmly locked, was in one corner of the room; and, what was still more pleasing in the sight of the peer, there appeared on one of the tables a small portable letter-case, in which, beyond all doubt, the knight had placed the papers which were of so much consequence to Lord Dewry.

Lord Dewry took the wax, and bidding the servant who brought it hold the taper, he sealed first the letter-case, and then the valise, and requested the vicar to do the same with his own seal. 'I am induced,' he said in a frank tone, 'to take all these precautions, by a conversation which I had with my poor friend this morning, in which he spoke of these things as of the most vital importance. It might be the mere rambling of delirium, but it might be more correct; and, therefore, as this caution costs me nothing but the wax, and you, my dear sir, nothing but the loss of a few minutes' time—though I know your time is valuable—I thought it best not to neglect a line of conduct, which I might regret not having pursued hereafter.'

'I think your Lordship is quite right,' replied the vicar, placing his seal also on the cases. 'In matters of worldly prudence, and in our religious duties, where there is anything to be done which may produce good, and cannot produce evil, to neglect it is, in the one case, a folly, and in the other, a sin.'

The peer repressed the sneer that began to

curl his lip; and, perhaps, felt at his heart that the good man's words were true, though through life he had neglected the rule they taught. He then bade the servant close up the apartment, and lock the door, till the death of the unhappy knight should render the things that it contained the property of others; and descending the stairs with the vicar, he begged that he would favour him by remaining to dinner, which was about to be placed upon the table. The clergyman replied that he had long dined; and in answer to the offer of the peer's carriage to take him back to the vicarage, he answered that he would rather walk.

Early the next morning he returned to Dimden, where he received, as we have seen, the tidings which Colonel Manners sent him of the security of his son, which though it poured some balm into his heart, came too late to effect any change in his purposes against the gipsy.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PHAROLD AND HIS PEOPLE.

'THE time was,' thought the gipsy, as he climbed the hills once more, after leaving Colonel Manners at the house of Sir William Ryder,—'the time was when these limbs would have undertaken double the toil that they have undergone this day, as a matter of sport. But now they are weary and faint, like those of some sickly dweller in cities—of some slave of effeminate and enfeebling luxury. Age is upon me: the breaker of the strong sinew—the softener of the hard muscle—the destroyer of vigour, activity, and power has laid upon me that heavy hand, which shall press me down into the grave. But it matters not, I have outlived my time; I have changed, and the things around me have changed also.'

As he thus thought, whether from corporeal weariness, or from the listlessness of the dark melancholy which oppressed him, he turned from the high road into the first plantation that he met with; and, without such care for personal comfort as even a gipsy usually takes, cast himself down under the trees, and sought to refresh himself by sleep. Gloomy ideas, however, still pursued him long; and, with the superstitious imaginations of his tribe heightening the universal propensity to superstition in our nature, he fancied that the melancholy which disappointment, and anxiety, and difficulty, and failure, had produced, was but some supernatural warning of his approaching fate.

Sleep, however, came at length; and it was daylight the next morning ere the gipsy woke. He rose refreshed, and, pursuing the paths through the plantations and the woods, avoiding all public ways, and never venturing farther from the covert than to follow the faintly-marked track through some small solitary meadow, he mounted the remaining hills, and bent his steps towards the thick wood in which he had left his companions, revolving, as he went, what might be the probable fate of those to whom he had so perseveringly clung, when he, himself, should be no more.

He found the other gipsies all on foot, and busied about the various little cares of a fresh day, with the light and careless glee of a people to whom the sorrows of the past week are as a half-forgotten tradition. The old were talking and laughing at the entrances of their tents, the young were sporting together by the stream, and the middle-aged were employed in mending this or that which had gone wrong about their carts and baggage, and whistling as lightly at their work as if there were no such thing as grief in all the world.

At the door of his own tent sat she on whom, in this his latter day, he had bestowed the better part of all his feelings; whom he loved, at once, with the tenderness of a father and the tenderness of a husband,—an union of feelings that never yet produced aught but sorrow, for it never can be returned in the fulness of its own intensity. She was looking lovelier, too, than ever he had seen her; and though, Heaven knows, her beauty owed but little to the richness of dress, yet there was something of taste and elegance in her attire, rude as it was in quality, that pleased the eye of one who had acquired a knowledge of what constitutes beauty in other times and circumstances.

Lena did not hear the approach of any one till Pharold was within fifty paces; but the moment his well-known step met her ear, she started up and ran to meet him, with smiles that were, perhaps, the brighter because she felt that she had something to atone for, weighty enough to be concealed, and yet not to oppress her very heavily. Pharold pressed her to his bosom; and whatever he might try to believe, he felt—felt to his heart's inmost core—that there was at least one person on the earth that he should wish to remember him, after the stream of time had washed away his memory from the hearts of others.

He gave but one moment to tenderness, however; and the next, turning to the rest of the gipsies, he inquired, 'What news of the boy?' The old woman was instantly called from one of the tents, and came willingly enough to make her report to Pharold, though she grumbled audibly all the way at being hurried, and at such tasks being put upon her at her years.

'Well, Pharold, I have done your bidding,' she said, in a tone both cajoling and self-important, 'and have seen the lad. Poor fellow, his is a hard case, indeed; and such a fine, handsome boy, too, and so happy a one as he used to be——'

'But what said he, woman?' interrupted Pharold, sternly. 'Keep your praises of him till he be here to hear them, and thank you for them; for doubtless he is the only person who will do so. Tell me what he said of his situation.'

'What he said!' replied the beldam; 'why,

what should he say, but that if he be not got out to-morrow night—that is, this night that is coming,—he will be sent away to the county gaol, and hanged for the murder of that fellow that is dying or dead up at the house? That's what he said.'

'But did he say how he was to be delivered?' asked Pharold. 'That is the question.'

'Yes, to be sure he did,' answered the old woman. 'Do you think I went there for nothing? He may be delivered easy enough, if folks like to try. You know the windows of that there strong room, Pharold, well enough, when they had you up at the house, and wanted to make a gentleman of you, but found they had got hold of the wrong stuff ——'

Pharold's brow grew as dark as a thunder-cloud. 'On, woman, on with your story,' he cried, 'and turn not aside to babble of the past. What have you or I to do with the past? You were the same then that you are now, only that the vices and follies of youth have given place to the vices and follies of age.'

'Well, well, I'm sure I'm telling my story as quickly as it can be told,' replied Mother Gray; 'but, as I was saying, you know the windows well enough, and know that any one that is at all strong could knock off two or three of the bars, and let the boy out in a minute. Any one could do it.'

'Oh, but he said that nobody but Pharold must come,' cried Lena, eagerly, forgetting for the moment all caution, and then reddening, like the morning sky, as soon as she had spoken.

'Ha!' cried Pharold, turning his keen dark eyes full upon her, 'said he so? and how know you that he did say so, Lena? Ha!'

The poor girl turned redder and redder, and looked as if she would have sunk into the ground, while Pharold still gazed sternly upon her, as if waiting an answer; but the ready cunning of the old woman came to her aid with a lie. 'How does she know that he said so?' cried the beldam: 'how should she know it but by my telling her?'

Lena heard the falsehood more willingly than she would have spoken it, though by her silence she made it her own, as much as if her lips had given it utterance.

'"Tis well,' said Pharold, with a bitter smile curling his lip. 'So he said that none but Pharold should come? Now tell me, woman, if your tongue be not so inured to falsehood that it cannot speak truth,'—Lena burst into tears, and crept back to her tent, while Pharold went on,—'tell me why this boy said that none but Pharold must come, when any one else could remove the bars as well?'

'Because he said that any one else who did not know the park might make some mistake,' replied the old woman, 'and so ruin both himself and poor Will.'

Pharold mused for a moment or two, and then asked, 'Was all quiet when you went?'

'As quiet as a dead sheep,' answered the old woman, with a grin.

'And no one stirring in the house or in the park?' demanded Pharold.

'In the park all was dark and solitary,' she replied: 'I saw nothing but some fine fat deer, and an owl that came skimming along before us in the long walk; and on the outside of the house all was quiet enough too: but there were two rooms above where there were lights; and I waited a while to see if they would be put out: but they were so long, that I made up my mind, as all the rest was still, to creep on; and I got close under the boy's window and called his name, and he told me that the lights were in the room where the man is dying.'

Pharold mused again; but the man whom we have heard called by the name of Brown, a powerful gipsy of about forty years of age, took a step forward, and laid his hand kindly upon Pharold's arm. 'I tell you what, Pharold,' he said, 'this seems to me a doubtful sort of business. I do not think the boy would do anything willingly to trap one of us: but he may have been taken in somehow; and it does seem as if there was something strange about it; so I'll tell you what, I'll go, and the old woman shall show me the way.'

'No, Brown, no,' said Pharold; 'I would put upon no man what I was afraid to do myself,—if I could be afraid to do anything. If there be no treachery, there is nothing to fear: and if there be treachery, I should be base, indeed, if I let any of my people fall into what was meant for myself. No, no, I will go: no man can avoid his hour, Brown. We all know that when fate has fixed what is to happen we may turn which way we will, but we shall not escape it. I will go; and if there be treachery, let it light upon the heads of those that devised it. It is my fate—I will go.'

'No, no, Pharold,' said the other; 'let me go. To me they can do nothing. Me they cannot charge with any crime, even unjustly; for I was not in the park at all when the man was shot. You and all the others were, though you went there to prevent it; and so, if they catch you, they may send you to prison; but if they catch me, they can do nothing with me. They can but say I came to speak with the poor boy through the bars.'

Pharold, however, persisted. It had ever been his habit amongst his fellows to take upon himself the execution of anything difficult or dangerous; and he regarded it almost as a privilege, which he clung to the more, in the present instance, from a superstitious conviction that fate was leading him on, and that it was useless to struggle against its influence. 'There yet remains the whole day before us,' he said, when he had silenced opposition, 'and but little remains to be done. Call all the people round me, Brown, for I am going to speak with them,—perhaps it may be for the last time.'

The gipsies who already surrounded him saw well that a presentiment of approaching death weighed upon the mind of him who had been so long their leader, and it is but doing them

justice to acknowledge that most of them grieved sincerely to observe that such was the case. None, however, offered comfort or consolation; for their belief in their own superstitious traditions was far too strong for any one to dream even that such a presentiment might prove fallacious. The rest of the tribe were soon called together; and, stretching themselves out in various groups around, with the clear forest stream bubbling and murmuring through the midst, and the bright sun streaming through the oaks and beeches upon the bank on which they lay, they waited in silence for what Pharold had to say. The tone he assumed was simple and calm, perhaps less marked and emphatic than that which he generally affected. 'My friends,' he began, 'I am going this night upon a matter more dangerous than any that I have ever yet attempted, at least so, from many reasons, I am led to think; in it I may probably be taken by men who hate and persecute us; and, if I be so taken, do not deceive yourselves; I shall never return amongst you alive. I feel it, I know it; and, therefore, if by the first light of to-morrow's sun I have not returned, look upon me as amongst the dead, take up your tents, and go as far as you may. When you are so far from this place that they cannot follow you to persecute you, seek out what has become of the clay that I leave behind. Lay me in the earth, in some green wood, but where the summer sun may shine upon me, and the winter snow may fall: turn my face to the eastward, and put one hand upon my heart, and let not the earth that covers me be more than four palms deep. When you have done all this, forget me; but forget not what I am going to say. Remember, ever before all things, that you are a nation apart, and mingle not with the strangers amongst whom you dwell. Let them follow their way, and you follow your way. Give obedience to their laws, but maintain your own liberties; bend to their power, but preserve the customs of your fathers. Shut them out, too, as far as may be, from amongst you: let them not learn either your history, or your language, or your knowledge; for if they do they will make these the means of softening and enslaving, under the pretence of civilising and improving you. Forget not that you have been, and that you shall yet be, a great people; nor ever think that there are too few of you left for the time of your greatness to come. Look at this acorn: it fell from a great tree that has been cut down; and though now it be smaller than the egg of a wren, it shall yet be as great as the mightiest of the forest. So is it, and so shall it be, with you. None of you can ever gain so much as I could have gained by abandoning my people; but I would not do it. I refused wealth, and ease, and honour, and I chose poverty, and wandering, and persecution, because I was born of the gipsy race, and would not belie the blood of my fathers, by mingling with the persecutors of our people—because I would not be chosen from amongst them for a plaything and an experiment. I learned their knowledge, though they learned not ours, and I returned to mine own as true in heart as when I left them. Thus let it be with you all; and if, after I am gone, the name of Pharold is ever mentioned, let it be as an example of how true our people should be to the ways of their fathers.'

He paused, and there followed amongst those who surrounded him the low murmur of people who draw their breath deep after a long and eager attention, but no one spoke; and in a few minutes Pharold proceeded: 'If I return no more, there will be some one wanting to lead and direct you all aright. My choice falls upon you, Brown, as the calmest, and the wisest, and the bravest, with years sufficient to insure experience, and yet with vigour unimpaired by age. Do you consent, my brothers, that he should be your Ria?'

The choice was one which all anticipated, and with which all were pleased, except, perhaps, two or three, who, feeling that they ought to be satisfied though they were not, and that they must submit whether they liked it or not, yielded with the rest, or, perhaps, gave more clamorous approval. 'I have now,' continued Pharold, turning towards Lena, who, since the people had been called round him, had remained near in silent tears while he had been speaking,—'I have now spoken to you of all things, save one. I leave amongst you my wife, then a widow; and, as heaven knows I have dealt justly with you all, so, I beseech you, deal justly and kindly by her. Be unto her as brethren and sisters. I supplied unto her the place of parents that are dead; you supply unto her, I beseech you, my place when I am dead also. Let her share with the rest in what you gain, until she shall choose out some one to be to her a support and a husband. Let her choice depend upon herself, but oh, let her choice be good; let it not fix upon a fair form or a smooth tongue, but upon a strong mind and a noble heart.'

He spoke firmly, but, perhaps, somewhat bitterly; and Lena, though she raised her eyes for a moment with a look of imploring deprecation, said nothing, but wept on in silence. 'And now,' continued Pharold, 'I will have done, my friends, with but one more injunction, which is, Keep together. Let not the people of the land separate you, but be ye true amongst yourselves.'

Thus saying, he rose from the bank on which he had been leaning, and the rest sprang upon their feet also. His scanty auditory then dispersed to their several occupations again, though some lingered for a few minutes, gazing upon him as on one they might never see more after that day was over; and Pharold, after speaking a few words in a gentler tone to Lena, laid his hand upon the arm of the man Brown, and walked with him slowly down the course of the stream.

Their conversation was long: many were the sage and prudent maxims that Pharold gave to him whom he had pointed out as his successor,

many the wild and singular cautions which he suggested. He did not, until the end, refer again to himself in any way; but, after having spent nearly two hours in giving instructions respecting the rule and protection of the tribe, he added 'I need not tell you, Brown, that I feel the flame going out—not that it is weaker, not that it is less bright—the broadest blaze of the fire is often the last, but it is near its end; aud if it be not to-morrow or the next day, in the manner that I apprehend, or in the way my enemies seek to make it, yet death will come soon, in his own time, and by his own path. Look there!' and he spread out before his comrade his broad palm, traversed with the many lines and marks which are usually to be found there. The other gipsy gazed on it for a moment, gravely, but made no reply; and Pharold went on:—'Nevertheless, as I have heard the ignorant and the conceited declare, that people often do things themselves to bring about a fate that is foretold them, I will neglect nothing that can turn aside mine. If, then, by dawn to-morrow, I have not returned to you, send instantly a trusty messenger to the small village of ——, where I have sent several times before, to the house of Mr. Harley—many of the people know it—bid them tell him for me, that I am in prison, on a false accusation which he knows of, and that if he would save me, he must come over to Dimden soon. See that it be done rightly, Brown; for were anything to happen to me without his knowledge, he would say that I had used him unkindly, or had not confidence in his honour.'

'I will do it myself, Pharold,' replied the gipsy: 'I will take one of those that have been over, to be sure of the place, and will see the man myself, if it be possible.'

'Oh, he will see you,' answered Pharold: 'he has learned bitter lessons in life, and knows that a better heart may beat under a gipsy's bosom than under the robes of peers and princes. Now, then, I have said all, Brown; and fare you well, my friend. You, at least, will not forget me.'

'Never!' answered the other; and they parted. During the rest of the day a degree of gloom naturally hung over the party of gipsies; and wherever Pharold turned, there were eyes looking at him, with some degree of superstitious awe, as one in whom approaching fate was already visible. Evening, however, came at length, and night began to fall; and, ere the first twinkling star could claim full possession of the sky, a thin whitish autumn mist rose up from the valleys, and came drifting with the wind through the trees, and down the course of the little stream by which the gipsies' tents were pitched. Pharold remarked it with satisfaction, exclaiming, 'May it last, may it last. With such a mist as that, and a dark autumn night, he were a keen man, indeed, that could take me in Dimden Park.'

As far as the continuance of the mist went, he was gratified to his wish; for it not only remained, but increased in density to that degree, that even round the gipsies' fires the dark faces lighted by the red glare, appeared dim and phantom-like to those who sat on the other side of the blaze. Pharold himself remained from sunset till nearly midnight in his tent; and Lena had not appeared at all from the time he had spoken to the tribe in the morning. At length Pharold came forth, and the gipsies who were still congregated round the fires, thinking that he was about to join them for a time ere he went, made room for him amongst them: but he glided on past them all, merely saying, in a low voice, as he came near the spot where Brown was placed, 'I go! do not forget!'

He then walked rapidly on, threaded the most intricate mazes of the wood, traversed the common above the park, leaped the park-wall, near the spot where Dickon and his party had entered on the ill-starred deer-stealing expedition, and paused for a moment to look around him, and consider his farther proceedings. The mist which lay heavy on the common and the lawns was still more dense and dark amidst the covered walks and narrow paths of Dimden Park; but the obscurity proved of but little inconvenience to one so much accustomed to wander in the night as Pharold.

Thus he walked on, through the thick trees and amongst the narrow paths of the park, without ever either taking a wrong direction, or running against any of the massy trunks round which the small footway turned. Ever and anon, however, he stopped to listen, but all was still: there was not a voice, a footstep, a rustle, a sound of any kind to be heard, till he entered one of the principal alleys leading towards the house, when a distant clock struck a quarter to twelve, and, as if roused by the sound, the owl poured forth her long melancholy cry, and flitted slow across Pharold's steps, stirring slightly the foggy air with the scarcely heard wave of her light wings.

Pharold marked its voice, and felt it flap past him; and, in that mood when the heart connects every external thing with its internal gloom, he muttered, 'Hoot no more, bird of ill omen! I am prepared and ready!'

The end of the alley which he had chosen opened upon the side of the lawn, at the distance of perhaps a hundred yards from the house. But the fog was too thick for even the bare outline of the mansion to be visible; and the only thing that indicated its proximity was the appearance of two or three rays of light, pouring from the apertures in some window shutters, and streaming through the white mist, till they lost themselves in the night. Pharold paused and gazed; and emotions as mingled, but less painful, affected his bosom, as those which had been experienced by Lord Dewry when he had last looked towards the same building. All was silent around: he felt himself secure in the obscurity; he was in no haste to go on; and as he stood and gazed towards the dwelling where two years of the happiest

part of life had been spent, his mind naturally reverted to the past. He called up those boyish days, the pleasures he had enjoyed, his friendship with one noble-minded youth, and the injuries he had since received from the other companion of his boyhood.

He stood and gazed for near ten minutes; and then ending his reverie, as all deep contemplations end, with a sigh, he turned slightly from the path he had been pursuing, skirted round the edge of the wood, and, without crossing the open space, approached, through the trees, that part of the building called the Justice-room, which lay, as we have seen, contiguous to the chamber in which the boy was confined. Since he had been there, however, the river had encroached so much upon the bank, that no one less active and expert than himself would have found space to pass between the walls of the high old chapel-like projection, so called, and the edge of the bank above the water. He accomplished it, however, though with some difficulty; and then, turning the angle of the building, approached the window of the strong room. Raising himself on a ledge of ornamental stonework, which ran along the basement, he put his hand through the bars to feel whether the inner window was closed or not, and finding that it was shut, he knocked gently on the glass with his knuckles. The moment after it was opened, and the voice of the youth demanded, 'Who is there?'

'It is I, William,' said Pharold; 'are your limbs free?'

'They are free of cords,' answered the lad in a voice that trembled with agitation, and, perhaps, with remorse;—'they are free of cords, but I cannot get out.'

'I will open the way for you then,' answered Pharold; 'but when I have picked out the mortar from these bars, you use your strength to force them out from within.'

The boy made no answer, but listened to hear if those who lay in wait had taken the alarm; and a hope did cross his mind that they might have neglected their watch on that dark and chilly night, and that Pharold might give him the means of escape, without the consummation of the treachery to which he had yielded. The hope increased, as Pharold, with a small crow-bar, gradually loosened the iron from its socket in the stone, and yet no one appeared; and as soon as it was practicable, the boy, using his whole strength from within, forced out the lower end of the bar. The space, however, was not yet large enough to give a passage to his shoulders, and the gipsy instantly applied himself again to loosen the neighbouring bar. 'Oh, make haste, make haste,' cried the youth, with almost frantic eagerness,—'make haste, Pharold, make haste.'

'Hush!' cried Pharold, sternly, and turned hastily to listen; but at the same instant two men sprang upon him. The gipsy struggled to cast them off, but his foot slipped, and they both fell with him to the ground. Ere he could rise, two more were added to the assailants; and finding resistance vain, Pharold instantly abandoned the attempt, suffered his arms to be pinioned with a burning heart, and followed whither they led him.

Several lights and several figures appeared at the small back door to which they conducted their prisoner; and more than one lantern was raised to his face, and more than one inquisitive countenance stared into his, as he was taken through some long stone passages towards the very room from which he had been endeavouring to liberate his treacherous young companion. The four men who had seized him hurried him on, keeping close together, as if afraid that, notwithstanding all their efforts, he might still escape. At the door of the strong room they paused; and one, producing a key, proceeded to apply it to the lock, and to undraw the heavy bolts and bars. Pharold spoke not a word; but the moment the door was open, and the light, from some lanterns behind, flashed in through the aperture, his eyes sought the unhappy youth, whose face was covered with tears.

Pharold had only time to ask himself, 'Is he guilty, or is he innocent?' when, springing past him and those that conducted him, the lad made straight towards the door. One of those behind instantly stopped him, exclaiming, 'Holla, my lad, where are you going so fast?'

The one who had opened the door, however, turned round almost at the same time, crying, 'Let him go, let him go; now we have got this one, we do not care for the other. Let him be off as fast as he will.'

The gipsy's doubts were cleared up in a moment. He saw himself betrayed by one of his own people, whom he was in the very act of rescuing; he saw himself delivered up by one for whom he had been risking so much; he saw his most generous feelings made use of as snares to take him; and he believed that she whom he loved more than anything on earth was a party to the infamous treachery by which he had been entrapped. Oh, how he hated the whole human race!

So deep, so powerful was the agony that he suffered, that, without a word, without a movement, he stood upon the spot to which his captors thrust him forward, his dark eyes bent upon the ground, his pinioned hands clasped together, as if they had been rivetted with iron, his limbs as motionless as if they had been stone. The people round gazed at him, but he saw them not; they taunted and they sneered, but his ear was dull. He felt not at that moment the insolent gaze, the brutal jest, the loss of liberty, the very bands that wrung his muscles. He felt alone that he was betrayed, that his love and his confidence had been cheated and despised. All the rest was nothing. That, that was the iron that entered into his soul! Ere he had been there a minute, the keeper Harvey, who had not been amongst those that took him, pushed through the gaping crowd, to assure himself that the report which

had reached him was true. But there was something in the gipsy that the man felt and feared, with feelings full of hate, indeed, but nearly akin to awe; and when he saw him stand there like a statue, in the stern bitterness of utter despair, a faint conception of his sensations thrilled even through the coarse mind of the keeper; and after a hasty glance, without proffering a word, he made the rest retire, and following them himself, locked and barred the door.

At about three o'clock in the morning, those who watched in the gipsy encampment were roused by a hasty step, and in a moment after the boy William, all panting and wild, stood by the fire. 'What news? what news?' cried one of the men, eagerly; 'where is Pharold?'

'Bad news!' answered the youth, gazing round him with a look of bewildered consciousness: 'they have caught Pharold as he was helping me out of the prison.'

'Brown,' cried one of the men, approaching a neighbouring tent,—'Brown, here is bad news; they have caught Pharold, and here is Will come back.'

Brown instantly started from the hut and came out to the fire; but he was not the only one; for Lena's sleepless ear had caught the tidings, and she, too, rushed out, with many others that the noise had awakened. Wild apprehension and distress were in her eyes; but she spoke not, while Brown proceeded rapidly to question the lad on what had occurred. The trembling tone in which he answered might proceed from fatigue and agitation at his escape, the varying colour on his cheek might be the flash of the newly stirred up blaze; but there was a rambling and inconsistent character about the story that he told concerning his own escape and the capture of Pharold that raised doubt in many. 'You rushed past the people,' said Brown, after many other questions, 'and got out even after they had taken Pharold. Did no one try to stop you?'

'Yes,' answered the lad; 'one man did; but I got away from him, too, and ran as hard as I could. —But why do you look at me so, Lena?' he added, unable to bear any longer the keen, fierce glance which she had never withdrawn from his face for one moment from the time she had first come forth.

'Why do I look at you so?' cried the girl, stepping forward boldly towards him, and casting back the jetty hair from her forehead while she spoke, with a burning cheek and flashing eye, and almost frantic vehemence of tone, —'why do I look at you so? Because, base traitor, you have betrayed him that came to save you—and you know it well!—because you have cheated me into persuading him to go;— and oh, if such a foolish thing as love for me had any hand in what you have done—and I say boldly before them all that I believe it had —may that love stay by you to curse you to your latest day! For think not you will prosper in your villany—I hate you! I abhor you! I spit upon you! and I call God and the heavens to witness, that if there were not another man in all the earth I would die sooner than be your wife! Cast him out from amongst us, Brown, cast him out! Dickon was but a child in villany to him; Dickon was wilful and violent, but he was not base and false; Dickon might be a rebel, but he was never a traitor. Cast him out, Brown, cast him out; for the blood of my husband is upon him; and I will not dwell in the same tents with him. He cannot deny it; his face speaks it; his tale is not even like truth. Oh, my heart misgave me when he used so many vows and protestations last night that he would not have Pharold put in danger for the world. Truth is more simple; and he is a traitor, and the seller of his friend's blood!'

She spoke with all the energy of passion and indignation: her eyes flashed, her arms waved, her very form seemed to increase in size with the wild vehemence of her feelings; and the unhappy youth in the meantime stood before her, with bent head and averted glance, like a convicted criminal before his judge.

'You are guilty, William,' said Brown, gazing on him with pity, mingling a drop or two of milder feeling with the sternness of his abhorrence for a crime almost unknown amongst them,—'you are guilty.'

The youth made no answer; and after a pause the other went on:—'You must go out from amongst us, for we cannot shelter a traitor. And yet I grieve for you, William, that anything should have tempted you to commit such a crime. But still you must go out from amongst us; for if we be not all faithful to each other, in whom can we trust? Yet I would not cast you alone upon the world, so that one fault might bring on a hundred; and therefore I will send you down to the north country, where, on the side of Cheviot, you will find more of our people, amongst whom I have a brother: seek him out, and tell him I sent you to him.'

'I will not go there,' answered the youth, doggedly,—'I will not go there, to have this story thrown in my teeth every hour; I will rather go and seek out Dickon, and rove with him.'

'No, no, Billy, my chick,' cried the old woman Gray,—'no, no, go down to the Yetholmers, as Brown says—a merry set they are, and a free, and I will go with you, my lad. I dare say Dickon has gone thither already; and, do you hear, Bill, I dare say amongst the bold young lads thereabouts we may be able to get up as fresh a band as this is; and I have got a good penny under my cloak, and I will be a mother to you, my boy. Then who knows, when you are a smart young fellow, with a goodly band of your own, whether this young minx here, who has flown at you like a wild cat, about that Pharold, who is no great loss anyhow—perhaps she may be sorry enough that she was not more civil.'

'I shall be sorry,' said Lena, in a less violent, but not less determined tone than she had before used,—'I shall be sorry if ever I hear the name

of such a base and cowardly thing as he is upon this earth again.'

'Well, well, scornful Mistress Lena, you may rue,' replied the beldam.—'What say you, Will, will you take me with you?'

The youth at first had shown no very strong liking for the old woman's company; but the hopes of better fortunes which she had held out to him, the boldness with which she had taken his part, the stern and reproachful looks of all around, and the feeling that he was parting for ever from all those with whom his life had hitherto been spent, made him willing to cling to any fragment of familiar things which would remain with him to soften the breaking of all accustomed ties. His conscience, too, reproached him bitterly with what he had done; and the company of any one would have been preferable to solitude with his own heart. Willingly, therefore, he caught at her proposal; and drawing himself up, prepared to steel himself against the contempt of his comrades, while the old woman went to make her brief preparations: but he saw nothing around but the stern, cold looks of persons who, in hatred and scorn, were waiting to see his departure. It was more than he could bear; and, calling to the old woman to follow him down the stream, he turned sullenly away, and walked slowly on without a word of adieu to any one.

'Brown,' said Lena, laying her hand upon the gipsy's arm,—'Brown, I know what I am going to ask is in vain, for Pharold, when he went, felt the shadow of death upon him, and I am a widow; but did he not tell you any way to rescue him, if he should be taken? He spoke with you long, and he said to me, too, that there was some way that might deliver him, though he spoke not clearly. Oh, if it be so, and he have told you how, lose no time, spare no exertion; for though, God knows, I was deceived by that base villain's artful speeches, and believed that my husband was safe, yet I feel,—although I know my innocence of thought, or word, or deed,—I feel as if I were guilty of his death.'

'No, no, Lena, no, no. We all know that you are not,' answered Brown, in a kindly tone; 'but go you to your tent, poor girl, and trust to me to do everything to rescue Pharold that can be done. First, I will try the only means that he himself pointed out. I will follow his directions to the letter. Then, if that should fail, I will try what strength of arm can do; for I will not let him be lost if I can save him. He was a good man, and a wonderful man, Lena. We shall never see his like amongst us.'

Lena burst into tears: they were the first that she had shed, but they were too bitter for any restraint; and turning to her tent, she gave way to them in solitude. In the meantime Brown turned to call one of the younger gipsies, who, on more than one occasion, had been Pharold's messenger, to inquire after Edward de Vaux; but ere the young man had joined him, Mother Gray, as she was called, tottered up, with a bundle on her arm, to bid him adieu.

'Fare ye well, Brown,' she said; 'fare ye well. I hope you may make a better head of the people than Pharold has been: a pretty mess he has got us all into here. I hope you may do better; but I doubt it, for you were great cronies, and would never listen to what I advised. So I am going to people who know how to manage matters better.'

'Get ye gone, then, old mischief-maker,' answered Brown; 'get ye gone, and the sooner your back is turned upon us the better. I have seen nothing prosper yet with which you had anything to do; and I dare prophesy that those people will never know peace or happiness where you are suffered to meddle. So get you gone, and Heaven send you a better heart and judgment. And now,' he continued, speaking to the young man who had come up, 'tell me, Arral, have you not been for Pharold to a house on the other side of the hill—the house of one Harley?'

'To be sure,' answered the young man. 'I have been four times.'

'Then come with me thither now,' answered Brown, 'and lead me by the shortest way, for I would be there, if possible, before daybreak.'

'That is not possible, Brown,' answered the other; 'for it wants less than an hour of the light, and go as you will it will take two hours and a half.'

'We must do our best,' answered Brown, 'and can do no more. Go on. Keep together, my lads,' he continued, turning to the rest of the gipsies,—'keep together till I come back, which will be before the sun is more than half way up. But have everything ready to go in case of need.'

Thus saying, he followed his guide; and pursuing very nearly the path by which Pharold had returned, he arrived in about two hours and a half at the same house to which Colonel Manners had been conducted. By this time, however, the sun had been long above the horizon; and when, after walking through the little shrubbery, they approached the door of the dwelling, a carriage and four smoking horses, with two servants in Mrs. Falkland's livery, were seen standing before the house. The gipsies, however, made their way boldly on, and rang the bell. This intimation was instantly answered by the servant, and, while they were still speaking to him, a shrill cry—evidently from a woman's lips—rang through the passage. Ere the servant could ask their business, a door on the right was thrown open, and the fine head of Sir William Ryder appeared, exclaiming, 'Henry, Henry! Bring water! She has fainted!'

A few moments of bustle and confusion succeeded, during which the gipsies were allowed to remain with the door open, and without any of those suspicious precautions, which the very fact of their race would have excited against them in any other dwelling. At length the ser-

vant returned; and Brown's first question was, 'Is the gentleman who was hurt worse?'

'No, much better!' answered the servant, 'and you may tell Mr. Pharold——'

'I can tell him nothing,' interrupted Brown, 'for that is what I have come here to say—that his enemies have caught him; and that if Mr. Harley would save him, he must bestir himself speedily.'

'Indeed!' said the servant; 'indeed! that will not be very good news to my master's ear; but I must break in upon him to tell it, nevertheless. Wait a minute, my friends, and I will go and see what he says.'

The servant then entered the room where his master was, and from which proceeded the sounds of eager voices speaking. A moment or two after the door again opened, and the gipsies were joined by the person they sought. Their story was soon told, and easily understood; and the brow of their auditor knit into more than one deep wrinkle as they spoke.

'I *will* bestir myself,' he said, in answer to Brown; 'I *will* bestir myself, and that instantly too. So rest satisfied in regard to your friend's fate: for, be assured that I can break the net in which they have entangled him, as easily as I could a spider's web; and I will do it, too, with less remorse than I would the toils of the hunter-insect. I will not lose a moment. Henry, have horses to the carriage, and let me know when it is here.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

A DEATH-BED CONFESSION.

'HAS the parson come?' demanded the low faint voice of Sir Roger Millington, as he turned round from a brief and half-delirious doze, on the morning after Pharold's capture: 'has the parson come?'

'Not yet, sir,' answered a sick nurse, who was now the only person left to attend him. 'It is not ten minutes ago since you first told me to send for him.'

'I thought it had been much longer,' said the dying man. 'But what is all that noise in the house? They seem as if they were making all the disturbance that they could, on purpose to kill me with the headache.'

'I daresay, sir, it is some of the other magistrates come, sir,' answered the nurse; 'for last night it seems they caught the gipsy, Pharold; and when I went down to send for Dr. Edwards, his lordship was sitting in the great parlour with Mr. Arden, waiting for two other magistrates to make examination, as I think they call it. I should scarcely have dared to send else—that is, if I had not known he had his hands full for many a good hour, because you see, sir, he forbade any one to let Dr. Edwards see you, whether you wished it or not.'

'Ah! did he so?' said the dying man, bitterly; and then, after a long pause, he added, 'but he would not care about it now, my good woman. That declaration that he teased me into making last night, was all that he wanted; and now I may die when I like—with or without benefit of clergy!' and he groaned faintly and sadly at his bitter jest upon himself. 'But do you think I am dying, woman?' he went on; 'I have lost all the pain; but I am fearfully weak, and my legs and feet have no feeling in them. Do you think I am dying? Ha! nurse, what does the doctor say?'

'He says you are very bad, sir; but he hopes——' replied the nurse.

'Pshaw!' interrupted the other; 'you have been tutored too. I wish the parson would come; he would tell me the truth.'

'I am sure I wish he would too,' cried the woman; 'for he knows better than I what ought to be said to you, sir.'

'Ah! I see how it is; I see how it is,' cried the unhappy man; 'I am dying, and they have kept it from me till they had got all that they sought;' and, like the stricken king of Israel, he turned his face to the wall, while one or two hot and bitter drops scorched his eyelids, and trickled over his cheeks. After a long silence, however, he again turned towards the woman, saying, 'He is very long: I wish to God he would come! I have a great deal that lies heavy at my heart; and I would fain hear some words of comfort before I die. You do not think he will be frightened away by what that rascally lord has said?'

'Ah! no, sir; no fear!' answered the nurse; 'Dr. Edwards is not a man to be frightened away by anybody or anything, so long as he thinks he's doing his duty. He is not one of that sort, sir. Why, last year, when the terrible catching fever was raging down in the village, and every one that took it died, he was night and day at the bedsides of the poor people that had it, although the doctor told him a thousand times that he was risking his own precious life: but he saw that it gave them more comfort than anything to see him; and so he went at all hours, and into all places.'

'I wish he would come,' groaned the dying man; 'I wish he would come.'

Almost as he spoke, there was a cautious step in the ante-room, and the lock of the door turned under the quiet noiseless hand of one evidently accustomed to the chambers of the sick. The next moment the clergyman entered, and advanced slowly towards the bed, although his heated brow and quick breathing showed that he had lost no time in obeying the summons he had received. He was a man between sixty and seventy, with scanty white hair covering thinly a high broad forehead, across which the cares and sorrows of others, more than his own, had traced two or three deep furrows. His countenance was grave, but mild; and his eyes full of both the light of feeling and the light of sense.

The nurse rose up from the chair in which

she had been sitting at the pillow of the dying man, and Dr. Edwards quietly took her place, without appearing to see that Sir Roger Millington was eyeing him from head to foot; and, notwithstanding his situation, was comparing the person before him with the prejudiced image of a *parson*, which habits of vice had alone enabled his imagination to draw.

'I am much obliged to you for admitting me, my dear sir,' said the rector, in a kindly tone. 'How do you feel yourself? Are you in less pain than when I last saw you?'

'Yes, I am in less pain, sir,' answered the other; 'but I rather believe that is no good sign. At least they told me, when I was in torture, that pain was a good omen for my recovery; and now I am in no pain at all, I suppose it is a bad one.'

'I am not sure that it is a good one,' answered the clergyman gravely; 'but at all events it has this good with it, that it leaves your mind and faculties perfectly free to consider fully your situation, and to take whatever measures, temporal or spiritual, may be necessary for your comfort and consolation.'

'Ay, that is what I want to come to, Dr. Edwards,' answered Sir Roger, 'and I am glad you have come to it at once. But first tell me—and I adjure you by Heaven to tell me true, for these people deceive me—am I dying, or am I not?'

'I would have answered you truly without any adjuration,' answered the clergyman. 'None can, sir, or ought to say to another that it is impossible he can recover; for God can and does show us every day the fallacy of our judgment in the things that we best comprehend; but I do believe that you are in such a situation that it were wise to prepare yourself for another world without loss of time.'

'Then I am dying,' said Sir Roger, solemnly.

'I am afraid you are,' answered the clergyman. 'To deceive you would be a crime. Your surgeon has himself told me that human skill can do nothing for you.'

Sir Roger Millington drew his hand over his eyes and groaned heavily; but, after a brief pause, he withdrew the white colourless fingers again, and, looking steadfastly at the clergyman, said, 'It is a terrible thing to die, sir—more terrible than I thought. I have fought in more than one battle, sir, and have had my single affairs too; but I never found out how terrible a thing death is till I came to lie here, and see life flow away from me drop by drop.'

'Because in no other case had you time for thought,' answered Dr. Edwards; 'but believe me, oh! believe me, that the very time for thought, which you seem to regard as an evil, is the greatest mercy of Heaven. Few, even of the very best of us, if any, can keep his heart and mind in such a condition of preparation as to be ready to pass from this state of mortal sin into life eternal, and to the immediate presence of a pure and perfect being, who, though He is merciful, is likewise just, and will by no means leave the impenitent transgressor unpunished. No man, my dear sir, when he has years and days before him, should trust to the efficacy of a deathbed repentance—a moment which perhaps may not be granted to him; but when a man has gone on in thoughtless neglect through the vigour of careless existence, and unexpectedly finds himself at the end of life with only a few short hours between him and that judgment-seat, where nothing can be concealed and nothing palliated, he may then take unto himself the blessed hope that repentance never comes too late, that our Saviour himself showed upon the cross that the last hour, the very last minute, of human life may yet obtain forgiveness of all the offences of the past, by evincing true repentance, founded on true faith.'

'But how can I show either true repentance or true faith?' exclaimed the dying man, with a peevish movement of the hand. 'All I can do is to say I am very sorry for everything I have done wrong, and that I believe the religion in which I was educated to be the true one—although I have thought very little about it since I was a boy at school. But it is no use! it is no use talking!' he added, seeing the clergyman about to reply. 'I have done many a thing, especially lately, that cannot be forgiven—for which I shall never forgive myself; and so how can I expect God to forgive them, who is better than I am, and who never knew what it was to be tempted as I have been?'

'You *can* expect God to forgive them, *because he is* better than you are, and because we have an intercessor at his throne, who has known what it is to be tempted, even as we are; because we have a mediator in Jesus Christ, the son of God, who was rendered subject to temptation a thousand-fold more terrible than any that we can endure, in order that he might obtain forgiveness for even the greatest of sinners, who truly repents himself of the evil he has done. Indeed, indeed, you greatly err in your ideas of God's mercy. But we had better, I think, be left alone;' and he made a sign to the nurse, who immediately retired into the anteroom.

'I am sure,' said the wounded man, feeling in some degree the effect of such consolatory hopes—'I am sure I do most sincerely repent of some things that I have done within this last week, and, indeed, all that I have done throughout the course of my life that is evil; and I do think, now that it is too late to mend it, that if I had taken a different course, and acted in another manner on many occasions, I should not only have been more comfortable now, but a happier man altogether.'

'Doubt it not! doubt it not!' said the clergyman. 'Those that sow in sin shall reap in bitterness. But still have good hope; the very conviction of the magnitude of your sins which you seem to entertain, is the first great step to sincere repentance.'

'Ah, but there are many things very heavy

on my heart and my conscience,' said the other. 'Tell me, Doctor Edwards, tell me,' he added, in a gloomy and anxious tone, 'tell me, can a man who has said that, and done that, which can take away the life of another upon a false charge, hope to be saved?'

The clergyman half started from his seat, and the other, sinking down again on the bed from which he had partially raised himself, exclaimed bitterly, 'I see how it is! I see how it is! No hope for me; and so I will die as I have lived, boldly, without thinking about it.'

'You greatly mistake me,' cried the clergyman; 'I wished to imply nothing of the kind.

'No, no,' said Sir Roger, 'say no more. I saw it in your face. I can easily imagine that a man may be pardoned for running another through when they were hand to hand—I remember many people in the Bible that did the same—and I doubt not that many another little sin might be forgiven; but for taking a man's life that never hurt one, by a cold-blooded, cowardly lie—I daresay that there is no forgiveness for that!' and as he spoke he drew his breath hard, and set his teeth, as if working himself up to meet the worst.

'God makes no such distinctions, as far as he has revealed himself to us,' answered Dr. Edwards. 'Murder, whether committed with the steel, or the poison, or the falsehood, is equally murder in his eyes. I was, indeed, surprised to hear you charge yourself with such a crime; but I repeat what I said before, that for that, as for every other sin, there is abundant mercy in Heaven for him that sincerely repents him of the evil——'

He paused, but the knight made no reply, and remained with a contracted brow, a muttering lip, and a wandering eye, struggling between two opposite states of feeling—the habitual daring which despair had again called to his aid, and the fear of death and judgment after death. 'Let me urge you,' continued the clergyman, when he perceived that he did not make any reply, 'let me urge you to consider for one moment what must be the state of him who, under the circumstances which you have named, neglects the only opportunity allowed him for repentance, and suffers the few short moments granted mercifully for that purpose to escape unemployed. Remember, sir, that death is not sleep! that the moment the eyes are closed on this world they open on another! Remember that the disembodied spirit, freed from the frailties and the motives of the flesh, must of necessity feel, in all their bitterness and blackness, the crimes which here we can palliate to ourselves, as well as conceal from others! Remember, that with feelings thus heightened, with eyes thus unblinded, the man who has committed the crime which you mention, and has neglected to repent of it fully, must go into the presence of the omniscient Creator to meet, in the face of thousands of worlds, the being whom his falsehood and his baseness had destroyed—that he must hear his crimes proclaimed in the ears of all, must listen to his eternal condemnation, and must bear unceasing punishment, the never-dying consciousness, not only of the crime that he has committed, but of having neglected the opportunity of repentance.'

The dying man writhed under the picture of the future presented to his mind—a picture which he had ever contrived to shut out from his own eyes; but now, as the reality was about to present itself, the conviction of its truth and its awfulness forced itself upon his heart even to agony; and, with clasped hands, as the clergyman concluded, he cried out, almost in the words of the Jewish lawyer, 'What shall I do to be saved?'

'Repent sincerely,' answered Dr. Edwards; 'and, as the first great proof of your repentance, make whatever atonement you can yet make, for the very horrible crime with which you charge yourself——'

'I can make atonement,' cried the dying man, raising himself joyfully on his hand as the thought was suggested to his mind; 'and I feel that then I shall die in peace. I can save the innocent,—I can punish the guilty,—and I will do both, if God gives me two hours more of life.'

'Such, indeed, will be the earnest of a true repentance,' cried the clergyman, 'and it is thus that a deathbed repentance can alone be confided in as efficacious. I wish not to pry into the secrets of your heart, sir, any farther than may be necessary for the purpose of affording you advice and consolation. We believe that the ear of God is ever open to our confessions as to our petitions, and therefore that to him they should be made; but if I can aid you in carrying into effect your purpose of full atonement, command me; and be sure that no earthly consideration of either fear or hope will induce me to pause or waver in the execution of my duty. I say what I have just done, because an evident desire has been shown by those who should know better, to hold you back from the only true way to peace of mind. God forgive me if my suspicions wrong any man; but before I came to-day, I thought the conduct pursued towards me strange; and now that I have heard so much from your own lips, I think it more than strange.'

'And you think right,' said Sir Roger. 'It is more than strange, but it is all part of a plan. I see it all now—I see it all. He—he—Lord Dewry concealed from me at the first that I was dangerously hurt. He would not let me see you, or any one else who would have dared to tell me so, because he was afraid I should blab. He would not let me have my papers over from Dewry Hall, pretending they had been forgotten, because he was afraid that I should destroy those we had manufactured between us, and last night, when I was half delirious, and would have signed away my soul for an hour's quiet and rest, he tormented me till I made a declaration before witnesses that I had received a

note from a man who never gave it me, and that this gipsy Pharold, whom they have now got below, was one of those who fired when I was wounded, though, in truth, I believe he did not come up till after.'

'This is horrible, indeed,' said the clergyman, not a little agitated by the very painful tidings that he heard. 'But let me beg you, sir, as you hope for pardon and eternal life in that world to which you must soon depart, let me beg you instantly to take measures to remedy the evil that you have been seduced into committing.'

'Yes, yes, I will do my best to remedy it,' answered the dying man, whose passions were now excited against the seducer who had led him forward to crimes from which even his mind had shrunk, all accustomed as it was to evil of a less glaring kind. 'Yes, I will do my best. Ay, and he affected to feel so much pity and friendship for me too, till he got what he wanted, and now he has not been near me all day. Ay, ay! and he promised me everything on earth that could make life happy to me when he knew that I was dying. But he shall not triumph in his villany. No, no!'

Although the clergyman was very willing that justice should be done, yet even that consideration was secondary in his mind to the wish of leading the unhappy man before him into a better train of feeling ere he passed to things eternal. 'By all means,' he said, 'let us proceed as fast as possible to make the atonement that you speak of, and to secure justice to the oppressed and innocent man you mention; but in doing so, my dear sir, do not forget for one moment your present situation. Let not wrath, or disappointment, or irritation influence you. Let your sole motive be, as far as human nature is capable of controlling and purifying its motives, the desire of showing, by full atonement, that repentance which, with faith in the merits of your Saviour, may be effectual to salvation.'

'Well, well, I will do my best!' answered the dying man. 'But let us make haste, for I am beginning to feel faint; and there is a dimness comes occasionally across my eyes, and a rush like water in my ears, that disturbs me. How shall we set about it, Dr. Edwards?'

'The best way will be to call in witnesses,' answered the clergyman, 'and to draw up before them a complete statement of everything that you think proper to reveal, therein setting forth that you are perfectly aware of your situation, and that you are in a competent state of mind for making such a declaration. I myself am a magistrate, although I seldom act; and will give the document every formality in my power.'

'Ay, but the witnesses! the witnesses, sir?' said Sir Roger; 'I am afraid that he may come in every minute and disturb the whole.'

'There is no fear of that, I believe,' answered the clergyman. 'In the first place, I would not permit such an interruption, were he a monarch; and in the next place I was told, that he and several magistrates were assembled to examine some prisoners before committal.'

'Ay, it is Pharold, the object of all his hate, that they have got hold of,' replied Sir Roger; 'and they will have him off to gaol on the very things I stated against him.'

'Then, indeed, no time is to be lost!' answered Dr. Edwards. 'The surgeon was to follow me here very soon; for I left him in the village. His assistant and the nurse are in the next room; and I am not sure that I did not hear his step also come in a moment ago. Thus we shall have sufficient witnesses, and one who can testify to your mind being clear and unbiassed. Shall I call them in?'

Sir Roger gave a sign of assent; and gazed eagerly towards the door to which the clergyman proceeded, as if he feared that some one else might be without. No one was in the anteroom, however, but the surgeon, his assistant, and the nurse; and Dr. Edwards having called them in, and briefly stated his object, they approached the bed, and the assistant, having obtained writing materials, seated himself as near the sick man as possible, to take down his exact words. Sir Roger was about to begin, but the clergyman interposed:—'One moment, my friend,' he said mildly; 'we must not forget our care for your eternal salvation, under any other consideration. Let us pray to God that the spirit under which this declaration is made, may be the spirit of truth, divested by his grace of human passions and frailties, that the repentance of which it is the fruit may be pure and sincere, and may be accepted:' and kneeling down, he offered a short but emphatic prayer, so full of simple and unaffected piety, that Sir Roger Millington found feelings springing up in his heart which he had not known for years, and which made the warm drops rise into his eyes.

The knight then proceeded in a voice, faint and agitated indeed, but nevertheless one which, in the profound silence that reigned around, could be distinctly heard. He took up his tale in years long back; he related how, in better times and circumstances, he had won a large sum from Sir William Ryder and the Honourable Mr. De Vaux. The first, he added, had alway the character of a frank, open-hearted, but gay and thoughtless young man; the latter that of one whose keen shrewdness would have insured him the highest fortunes, if the violence of his passions had not on many occasions marred his best-laid plans. The day, he said, had been fixed for the payment of the money, and it had been shrewdly suspected that there would be difficulty in procuring it; but the very day previous to that appointed for the discharge of the debt, Mr. De Vaux's brother was murdered; and, consequently, that gentleman succeeding to his title and estates, the payment was made without delay.

He then passed over at once the twenty succeeding years, and briefly but distinctly recapitulated all that had taken place since: he had come down from London, in the hope of mend-

ing his broken fortunes by an application to the wealthy peer.

All this, however, has been already detailed, and needs not repetition, though it caused more than one glance of surprise and grief to pass between the clergyman and the surgeon. Nevertheless, for the time, they made no comment, but suffered the dying man to proceed uninterrupted as long as he seemed inclined to go on. When he paused, however, and looked round feebly towards the clergyman, as if to ask,—'Have I done enough?'—Dr. Edwards rejoined, 'If you will permit me, sir, I will ask you one or two questions, to which of course you will answer or not, as you think fit. This young gentleman will take them down, however. They shall be short,' he added, seeing a look of impatience cross the sick man's face: 'may I ask, did his Lordship assign any reason for the enmity he showed towards this gipsy Pharold, and for taking such unjustifiable steps to destroy him?'

'He said that he was sure that he, Pharold, had been the real murderer of his brother,' answered Sir Roger; 'but I have my own thoughts upon the subject.' He paused, as if hesitating whether to proceed or not; and the clergyman paused too, for the mind of every one present had been led towards a suspicion, so dreadful, that each felt a degree of awe at the thought of hearing his own doubts confirmed by those of another. At length, however, Sir Roger Millington raised himself upon his elbow, as if he had made up his mind to a painful effort, and fixing his dim and hollow eyes upon the clergyman, he said, in a low but solemn tone, 'That was what he told me; but, as I am going into the presence of the Almighty, and casting away all malice against the man, I declare, that I believe he himself was the murderer of his brother, that Pharold knows it, and that such is the cause why he persecutes him even to death. Write that down, young man, for although I cannot discover all the links in the chain, nor all the motives of his cunning heart, yet it is fit they should be inquired into, and that the innocent should be delivered.'

The assistant wrote, and read what he had written, and the knight made an impatient sign for the paper and the pen. When they were given to him, he scrawled his name faintly at the bottom. 'And now, doctor,' he said, looking towards the surgeon, 'you certify there, that this declaration was made by me, when I had all my senses about me as fully as if I were in perfect health; and you, Dr. Edwards, certify that, at the time I made it, I knew that I was dying, and did it as the only proof I could give of my sincere repentance for many sins, of which the paper he wrung from me last night was not amongst the least. You may well say that I know I am near my end,' he continued, 'for I believe that I am nearer it than any one thinks.'

'Take a little wine and water, Sir Roger,' said the surgeon, looking at him, and remarking that strange and awful greyness, which generally precedes dissolution, coming like the shadow of some unseen cloud over the sick man's face; 'take a little wine and water. It can do you no harm.'

'I know that too well!' answered the other in a hollow voice, drinking the draught which the nurse handed him. 'It can neither do me harm nor good—for it is all passing away.' The wine seemed, however, to revive him for a moment, and he eagerly besought the clergyman to take the paper which had just been signed to the magistrates assembled below. 'Let them not pursue their injustice even so far,' he said, 'as to send an innocent man to gaol. I have been in a gaol myself, and know what it is.'

'I think,' answered Dr. Edwards, 'that perhaps I may be of more service with you here; for now that you have proved your repentance really, let me strive to assure you all the comforts thereof. I have much to say to you—much consolation and hope yet to hold out to you, if you will permit me.'

'Oh! yes; stay, stay by all means,' said the wounded man; 'do not you leave me. He can take it to them; for he can do this wretched carcase no good now: let him take it;' and he pointed with his finger towards the nurse, though, beyond doubt, it was the surgeon he intended to designate, distinctly showing that his sight had failed, though his power of hearing still remained.

'Perhaps you will have the kindness to do so,' said Dr. Edwards, speaking to the surgeon; 'but take care that it does not get into the hands of any one who may suppress it; for though we can all bear witness to the contents, yet the document itself is most valuable. I think I heard that Mr. Simpson was amongst the magistrates below. If so, give it into his own hand, for though a calm and quiet man, he has much good sense and much firmness. But let us fold it up and seal it first.'

The surgeon undertook the task, though, it must be confessed, not very willingly, for he loved not to do anything to any one that might afford matter of offence. He spent some time in inquiring where the magistrates were, and some time in consulting with a constable at the door of the great hall, whether it would be proper for him to go in. In short, at length, as he had just made up his mind, and had his hand upon the lock, the nurse whom he had left with the sick man, and who thought it absolutely necessary that he should be present at a patient's death, came eagerly to tell him that the unhappy Sir Roger Millington was in the last agonies. It was too good an excuse for shifting upon another an unpleasant duty, to be lost; and putting the paper into the constable's hand, he bade him go in and deliver it directly into the hands of Mr. Simpson the magistrate. The man received the commission as a matter of course; and proceeded to execute it, while

the surgeon returned to the sick room. He opened the door—all was still—the assistants stood holding back the curtain, and gazing fixedly in—the clergyman was kneeling by the bed-side, with his eyes raised towards heaven.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN THE JUSTICE-ROOM.

WHILE the dark and solemn scene of death had been passing above, with half-closed windows and a darkened apartment, events scarcely less painful had been taking place below, in the broad light of a clear autumn day.

Six magistrates, whom Lord Dewry, with the usual overacting of conscious guilt, had invited, in order to give every appearance of impartiality and justice to his unjust designs, dropped in one by one, and were ushered into the chamber where the peer sat, waiting with burning impatience for the arrival of the whole. Totally indifferent to the business themselves, each as he came in tortured the baron with light and impertinent gossip, of the weather, of the harvest, of the prospects of the country, of the new fashion of dress swords, and the exquisite effect of Maréchal hair-powder; and forced him into conversation while his heart was full of deep, stern thoughts, that abhorred the idle topics on which he was expected to speak. Some, however, mentioned his son; and congratulated him on the rumour of his safety, which had already spread over the county: and here alone the peer found matter on which he could converse feelingly, for the news of his child's safety had come to him, in the midst of the fiery passions that were agitating his bosom, like the thought of a drop of cold water to Dives in the midst of his torments. Each of his visitors wished to know more than general rumour had already told, and many were the inquiries in regard to how Captain de Vaux had been wounded, and who Mr. Harley could be, who had lately taken the house at Little ———. Of all this, however, Lord Dewry could tell them nothing. Colonel Manners's letter had been as laconic as possible; and, therefore, the peer could merely reply, that it appeared the wound had been received by accident, but that he intended to go over, in order to hear more, as soon as they had concluded the business on which they were assembling.

At length, the number was complete; and Lord Dewry having asked the servant who ushered in the last tardy magistrate if all were prepared, proposed that they should proceed to the old justice room, where they would find everything ready for them.

'The old justice room!' cried bluff Mr. Arden, 'I have not been in there for many a year, my lord. But I have seen many a thing done there, in my young days, that we should not dare to do now. They did not mince the matter in those times; and I remember in the year forty-five—now some three or four and twenty years ago—it was quite enough to be *strongly suspected* for a man to find his way to prison very soon, without all these examinations and investigations. But they are cutting down our powers every day, gentlemen. 'Pon my soul I think, when they have cut off every other part of my magisterial rights, they will cut off the tails of my coat, for the *better protection of the subject*, as they call it.'

A loud laugh followed; and thus with mirth and merriment they proceeded along the passages of a house, where despair and indignant grief waited anxiously in one room, and suffering, remorse, and death tenanted another. Preceded by two or three regular constables, they reached the little vestibule before the door of the justice room, where fifteen or sixteen persons were assembled, anxious to witness the proceedings. They had not, however, been admitted without selection; and amongst them were to be seen none but small tenants and dependants of the lord of the mansion. The little crowd drew back as the magistrates approached; and, the folding doors being thrown open, they entered the large old-fashioned hall, which had been prepared for their reception. It formed, as has been before said, a long parallelogram at the extreme of the building, built out upon the high bank to the west, and had probably been designed originally for a chapel. A table, covered with the various implements for writing, crossed the farther extremity of the apartment; and beyond it was an array of chairs for the magistrates, while at each end was a seat for the clerks; and a smaller table, also, under one of the south-east windows, was furnished with paper and pens for another secretary. The windows on that side were open, and the warm soft breath of the southerly wind was felt fanning the cheek, and breathing of nothing but peace, and gentleness, and tranquillity.

The magistrates proceeded to their places, and each taking a seat, left the chair in the centre vacant for the peer; but he, however, declined it, and begged Mr. Arden, as the senior, to preside at their proceedings.

'Nay, nay, my lord,' replied the bluff old squire: 'your official station in the county, as much as your rank, gives you the presidence.'

'In the present instance, however, my dear sir,' replied Lord Dewry, 'I must appear before you as a private individual, as I am here in some sort as the accuser, and if you find cause to commit the prisoner, I must become the prosecutor. Therefore, I will sit here beside you, but without exercising any official authority, in a matter where I am in a degree a party.'

'The prisoner cannot say that your lordship has not every disposition to give him impartial justice,' answered Mr. Arden, taking the vacant chair. 'You would have him let off before, when I would certainly have committed him; and now you will not exercise your authority

where he is concerned. Let him be brought in, however. Constables, bring in the prisoner.'

Two men instantly departed from the farther end of the hall for that purpose, and while they were gone some formal business was transacted, the clerks received their instructions, and one or two of the magistrates looked into Blackstone's new work, the volumes of which had been scattered about upon the table. At length a murmur and the sound of footsteps were heard, and the doors being again opened, the constables re-entered, followed by the persons who had been waiting without, reinforced by several of the servants of the peer, as well as by the footmen and grooms who had accompanied the magistrates thither. The principal object of the whole group, however, was, of course, the prisoner Pharold, and on him every eye was instantly fixed. Walking between the two constables, who did not attempt to hold him, he advanced boldly up the middle of the hall, and with a slight contraction of the brow, and curl of the lip, gazed on the party assembled to interrogate him with stern and fearless calmness. His wrists were handcuffed, but no other restraint was put upon him; and when he had advanced within a few yards of the table at which the magistrates were seated, he paused of his own will, and waited as if in expectation of what was to follow, merely turning round to some of the crowd who followed, saying sternly, 'Do not press upon me; you are near enough.'

Mr. Arden put on his spectacles, and after gazing for a moment or two at the prisoner, he turned towards Lord Dewry, and said, 'My lord, will your lordship be good enough to state the charge against this man; as of course that part of the business referring to the murder of your son must be dropped, since it fortunately turns out that he is alive. There are, however, I think, still two serious charges to be disposed of, and probably our best plan will be to examine into them separately; by separately, I mean, distinct from each other, though, as many of us have come some distance, we had better go into both ere we depart.'

Lord Dewry paused for several minutes ere he replied; and looked over some papers which he had laid upon the table before him; but in truth a momentary feeling of doubt and embarrassment crossed his mind. He had determined most positively to urge against the gipsy the death of his brother; he had arranged all his plans for that purpose; he had matured them perfectly; he had secured, as far as human ingenuity could go, every link of the chain; and nothing remained but to cast it boldly round his victim: and yet, at the very moment of execution, a doubt and apprehension, a sort of prophetic hesitation, seemed to seize him, and he wished that it had been possible to abandon the charge of the murder of his predecessor, and to confine his accusation to the deer-stealing and the death of Sir Roger Millington, which was now, as he well knew, so near, as to effect all that could be wished, by rendering the charge against Pharold capital.

He wavered for a moment, then, but he saw that the very wish to give up an accusation so boldly made would appear suspicious, if any one discovered it; and turning to Mr. Arden with a faint smile, he asked, 'With which of these charges had I better commence, my dear sir? The one which is susceptible of the most immediate proof is that referring to the recent offence.'

'No, no, my lord,' replied the magistrate, 'take them in the order of their dates. Let us get rid of the ancient business before we begin the other. 'Tis well to be off with the old love before we be on with the new, my lord.'

'As you think fit,' answered the peer, somewhat disappointed at the magistrate's decision, but determined, as he must proceed, to proceed boldly. 'Well then, my charge is as follows:—that the prisoner Pharold, now before you, did, on the 18th day of May, in the year 17—, feloniously and with malice aforethought put to death my unfortunate brother, the late Lord Dewry, in or near that part of the road from Morley village to Green Hampton, which crosses the wood called Morley Wood; and I am now ready to produce sufficient evidence to induce you to commit the prisoner to the county gaol for trial.'

While he spoke, the gipsy's eye rested on him with a glance so stern, so keen, so searching, that he felt as if the dreadful secret of his bosom —all its motives and all its feelings, its doubts, its apprehensions, its remorse, its complicated plans and subtle contrivances, were undergoing, one by one, the examination of that dark, fixed regard. Though he looked towards the prisoner as little as possible, yet the gipsy's eye was a load upon him, that oppressed and would have confused a less powerful mind than his own. Even as it was, however, he could not bear it without emotion, and turning abruptly to Mr. Arden, he went on,—'I trust, Mr. Arden, that you have brought with you the notes of the former examination.'

'Everything! everything, my lord,' replied the magistrate; 'prepared as I was for the case, I brought every memorandum that could at all bear upon it; and I think my clerk had better read the depositions made at the time, and then you can proceed with any new facts which may have since come to your knowledge.'

The peer bowed his head, and the clerk, under Mr. Arden's instructions, proceeded to read a variety of documents relating to facts with which the reader is already acquainted. It is unnecessary, therefore, to repeat them; but the demeanour of the two persons principally interested in the details was in itself sufficiently singular to attract the attention of some of the magistrates, though, if they sought in their own minds for the motives, they were

mistaken in the conclusions at which they arrived. During the reading of all the formal and immaterial part of the depositions, the gipsy remained with his eyes fixed upon the ground, and his head slightly bent, with the aspect of one who hears a thing with all the details of which he is too familiar to give it any deep attention. But when the clerk came to his own deposition, and read the declaration which he had made of having seen the murder committed, and marked the murderer so particularly as to be able to swear to him if he ever saw him again, his lip curled with a bitter and biting sneer, and, raising his head, he fixed his eyes upon his accuser, with a gaze that might well have sunk him to the earth.

Lord Dewry, however, encountered not his glance. He felt that the gipsy's look must be then upon him; and, though he kept his own eyes stedfastly on the papers before him, he turned deadly pale under the consciousness of his own guilt, and the knowledge of what must be passing in the bosom of the innocent man he had accused.

'This is your declaration, made twenty years ago, prisoner!' said Mr. Arden, examining the gipsy's countenance through his spectacles.

'I know it is,' answered the gipsy; 'and it is truth, which twenty years cannot change as they have done you and me, hard man!'

'Egad, he's right there!' cried the magistrate; 'twenty years have worked a woful change both in my eyes and in my teeth; but, thank God, I can ride as fresh as any man after the hounds, and shirk neither fence nor gate.'

'Have you anything to add to your declaration, prisoner?' asked Mr. Simpson, in a milder tone.

'Nothing,' answered Pharold.

'Let me ask you, however,' continued the other, 'whether you have ever, by any chance, seen the murderer since the events which you have detailed in this paper?'

'More than once!' answered the gipsy.

'Then, why did you not point him out for apprehension?' demanded Mr. Simpson.

'Because no one asked me,' replied Pharold. 'I told yon hard old man, that I would point the murderer out if he were set before me; but I never promised any of you to be as one of your hounds, and seize the game for your sport or advantage.'

'Then, if the murderer were brought before you,' asked another magistrate, 'would you point him out, and swear to him?'

The inquiry was taking a turn unpleasing to the peer; for although he felt well convinced that Pharold would, sooner or later, retort the accusation upon him, and was ready to meet it boldly and calmly, yet he was not a little anxious to conclude his own statement of the case first, and to bring forward every circumstance which could criminate the gipsy, in order to take all weight from the testimony of his adversary, and make the magistrates pass it over with contempt.

'I think,' he said, rising ere the gipsy could reply,—'I think, gentlemen, if you will now permit me to proceed with what I have farther to adduce, you will find the matter very much simplified, and can then examine the prisoner in whatever manner you think fit.'

'Certainly, my lord! certainly!' said some of the more complacent of the party; but the magistrate who had put the question was less easily turned aside; and he replied,—

'Permit the prisoner, my lord, to answer my question in the first place. My memory is bad,' he added, drily, 'and before we got to the end I might forget it. Now, answer me, prisoner—that is, if you do not object; there is no compulsion, remember—if the murderer were brought before you, could you and would you point him out, and swear to him?'

'That I could do so,' answered Pharold, 'I have already said; but that I would do so, I do not know. It would depend upon circumstances.'

Lord Dewry looked suddenly up, and their eyes met, but there was nothing in Pharold's glance at that moment but cold, stern indifference; and those who saw the look he gave the peer could not have distinguished that he was moved towards him by any other feelings than those which might well exist between the accused and the accuser. Lord Dewry paused, and a momentary feeling of remorse for that which he was engaged in crossed his bosom, now that he saw even persecution would hardly make the gipsy violate his word so far as to betray his fearful secret. But he had gone too far to recede, and he crushed the better feeling. He called up the image of Sir William Ryder returning to England, and supporting a charge against him by the testimony of the gipsy: he recalled the state of feverish apprehension in which he had lived for twenty years; and he went on with the work he had begun, resolved that the struggle should be commenced and ended now for ever, in the vain hope that thus his latter days might pass in peace!

'Now, my lord,' said the magistrate, when the gipsy had replied; 'now, my lord! I beg your pardon for detaining you.'

'Well, then, sir,' answered Lord Dewry, with some of his haughty spirit breaking out even then,—'well, then, if it quite suits your convenience, I will proceed. I must give a slight sketch of some events long passed, gentlemen; and the clerks had better take it down as my deposition, which may be sworn to hereafter. Not very long after my brother's death, gentlemen, I had some money transactions to settle with an honourable friend of mine, one Sir Roger Millington; and I went to London for the purpose. I found him just returned from Ireland; and he told me that, in the neighbourhood of Holyhead, he had met with an accident by which one of his finest horses had nearly been killed; but that he had obtained a secret from a gipsy there by which the animal had been completely cured. You may easily suppose I gave the anecdote but little attention

at the time. In settling our accounts, however, Sir Roger had to give me, in change for a larger sum, several small notes, on which he wrote his name. I took no great notice of these bits of paper till I returned to the country, when, on looking them over, I found, to my surprise, that one of them was marked with my brother's own name, in his own handwriting. This led to farther examination: and in this banker's book, and also in these memoranda, I found, by the dates and numbers of the notes, that the very note in question must have been drawn by my poor brother from his bankers, the day before his death. The next thing to be discovered was, where Sir Roger Millington had obtained it; but, as that gentleman was continually moving about from place to place, some time elapsed ere I could see him again. When I did so, however, I found that he had received this very note from a gipsy called Pharold, at Holyhead, in change for a larger one given him in order to purchase the secret by which the worthy knight's horse had been cured.'

'A most singular coincidence!' cried Mr. Arden. 'Murder will out, gentlemen!'

'For a long time no trace could be discovered of the gipsy,' continued Lord Dewry; 'but at length he suddenly reappeared in this neighbourhood; and one of my keepers obtained information that he and his gang had laid a plan for robbing my park of the deer. On his telling me this, I ordered him to take such measures as he thought expedient for seizing the whole of them in the fact; much more anxious, indeed, to capture my brother's murderer, than to punish the deer-stealers. It so happened, that just at the same time Sir Roger Millington came down to pay me a visit; and on hearing that the culprit was likely to fall into our hands that very night, he insisted upon coming over here, both to direct the operations of the keepers, and to satisfy himself that this gipsy Pharold is the same from whom he received the note. I would fain have persuaded him that it was a wild scheme; but he was a soldier, gentlemen, and accustomed to contemn all dangers. The unhappy result you know. He was mortally wounded, and is now lying in a state of delirium, if he be not already dead. Last night, however, I took advantage of a time when his mind was quite clear and rational, to obtain from him this declaration in the presence of competent witnesses; and herein you will find that he positively states that the man Pharold, whom he saw with the gipsy deer-stealers in Dimden Park, was the same from whom he received this note.'

'Foul, hellish liar!' exclaimed Pharold, starting abruptly from the state of calm and apparently indifferent thought in which he had been standing, with his eyes fixed upon the handcuffs on his wrists, and his head bent down. 'Foul, hellish liar! He never either gave me aught, or had aught from me! I cured his noble beast for nothing; and not for his sake either: but he gave me naught, nor would I have taken his gold if he had offered it.'

'What, then,' cried Mr. Arden, 'you acknowledge that you did see this gentleman at Holyhead, and did cure his horse by some nostrum in your possession. Clerk, take that down carefully.'

'Ay, and take down that, if in dying he say he either gave me aught or received aught from me,' continued Pharold, vehemently, 'he goes to the place appointed for liars and false witnesses, if the great God of all the universe be a God of justice and righteousness.'

'Do you know, gentlemen,' said Mr. Arden, turning round and rubbing his hands, 'I think that quite enough has been elicited to justify us in committing the prisoner without farther ceremony.'

'We might perhaps be justified,' said Mr. Simpson; 'but I think there is something more required of us than that, both by our own consciences and our precise duties. It lies with us to prepare the case as far as possible for superior functionaries; and, therefore, I should propose that we proceed at once to collect every information that is to be procured, and that we do not think of committing the prisoner till we have done so. A great deal more still remains to be——'

Here one of the constables advanced from the other end of the hall, and passing quietly round the table, interrupted the magistrate by handing him a sealed packet, which he instantly opened, and proceeded to read the first lines. While he did so, the constable advanced to the spot where the peer sat, and spoke a few words in a low tone of voice, while another magistrate, taking advantage of Mr. Simpson's silence, proposed that they should adjourn to the bedside of Sir Roger Millington, and receive his deposition officially.

'I am sorry to say,' answered Lord Dewry, with as grieved and melancholy an air as he could assume, under circumstances which were in reality satisfactory,—'I am sorry to say, gentlemen, that the wise and judicious proceeding just suggested cannot be executed, as the constable has this moment informed me that my poor friend is no more. His dissolution occurred a few minutes ago; and though I grieve for the loss of my friend, it would be vain to say that I am sorry that an event which was inevitable should have taken place so soon, when every hour of prolonged existence was an hour of torture.'

'I trust, then, that the declaration which he made last night,' said the same magistrate, 'was in every respect such as to be admitted in evidence. Will your lordship permit me to examine it?' The paper was handed to him, and he cast his eyes over it without any comment. Mr. Simpson, however, was evidently strongly affected by the packet he had just received. He returned more than once to several of the passages it contained; and when he had satisfied himself of the precise terms, he let the hand which held the paper fall over the arm of the chair, and with a pale cheek, and a look of deep

thought, continued gazing at vacancy for several moments.

The first thing that seemed to rouse him was a renewal of Mr. Arden's proposal for the instant committal of the prisoner, when, turning round abruptly, he said, 'No, Mr. Arden, no! we have not half gone through the case, and something has just been put into my hand which gives a very different aspect to the business altogether. This is a very painful paper, gentlemen, and the task put upon me is a very painful one; but, however, our duty must be done, and I will not shrink from mine. However, let me beg your lordship in the first instance to remark that this thing is no seeking of mine. For many members of your lordship's family I have the utmost respect and regard, and I would not willingly do anything to hurt any of your house; but, as I have said, my duty must be done.'

While he spoke, the gipsy's eye lighted up anew, but the countenance of the peer fell. His colour varied twenty times in a minute; but ere the magistrate had done speaking, he had recovered his self-command, and determined on his course, whatever might be the nature of the communication which Mr. Simpson had received. 'To what end, may I ask,' he said, haughtily, 'to what end does all this tissue of idle words lead, sir? Let me beg you to explain yourself, for I can conceive no circumstances under which your professed regard for my family should interfere in any way with the execution of your duty.'

'You shall hear, my lord, you shall hear,' answered Mr. Simpson, with more mild dignity than the peer had imagined he could assume. 'Constables, clear the hall there.'

'Shall we take away the prisoner, sir?' demanded one of the men who stood by his side.

The magistrate paused, and then replied, after a moment's thought, 'He has a right to hear anything that may benefit himself. He is here before us without legal advice or assistance of any kind, and he must not be shut out from a knowledge of facts which he may have to communicate to his counsel hereafter. You, constable, however, retire to the door. I think we are enough to manage one handcuffed man should he prove turbulent.'

None of the other magistrates interfered, the hall was cleared, and Pharold was left standing in the midst, with no other witnesses but the magistrates and their clerks. Restraining all his feelings by a mighty effort, the peer sat sternly gazing upon the speaker, with the violent passions that were working within, discernible only in the starting sinews of the thin, clenched hand which he had laid upon the papers before him.

'What I have to read, gentlemen,' continued Mr. Simpson, 'has just been sent me by the excellent rector of this parish, Dr. Edwards, and it is entitled, "The dying declaration of Sir Roger Millington, knight." It is, gentlemen, to the following effect;' and he proceeded to read the confession which fear and repentance had induced the dying man to make. The agitation of the peer was dreadful, but it was alone internal; and all that was externally perceptible were those signs of passion and indignation which an innocent man might feel at a false accusation. At length, however, when, in conclusion, the unhappy Sir Roger charged him boldly as the murderer of his brother, Lord Dewry started up, exclaiming—

'The raving madness of a delirious and dying man! How can you, gentlemen, sit and listen to such trash? But I will soon bring you proof of what state the man was in when that canting old fanatic saw him;' and he turned towards the door.

'Sit down, my lord!' said Mr. Simpson, sternly. 'I cannot allow you to leave the room.'

'Sit down! not allow me!' cried the peer, turning upon him with all the dark and haughty spirit of his heart flashing forth. 'Do you dare, sir, to use such terms to me in my own mansion?'

'Anywhere, Lord Dewry!' replied the magistrate. 'I say, sit down! or I must give you in custody to one of the officers. I will show you, gentlemen, in what state of mind was the deponent when he made this declaration. Here is the attestation of the surgeon and his assistant, that Sir Roger Millington was, at the moment he signed this paper, perfectly sane and rational; that he did it under the full knowledge that he was a dying man; and that every word here written was exactly used by himself. Gentlemen, this requires immediate investigation, for every word here written must greatly affect the prisoner before us.'

Lord Dewry had cast himself down again in his chair; but wrath in the present instance supported hypocrisy; for it was anger and indignation he sought to assume, and the former, at least in the present instance, required no acting. He folded his arms upon his breast, he rolled his dark eye over the form of the magistrate, and he set his teeth in his nether lip till the blood almost started beneath the pressure. In the meanwhile there was a confused and murmuring conversation amongst the magistrates, some standing, some sitting, and all talking together. At length Mr. Arden exclaimed, in a loud voice that overpowered the rest—

'Well, well, this matter requires much consideration. Let us, at all events, remand the gipsy for four or five days, while we inquire into the rest. Here he might be tampered with. But let us remand him to the cage at Morley.'

'Remand me!' cried the gipsy, in a tone that called instant attention, while his deep black eyes seemed flashing with living fire. 'Remand me! remand a man that you know to be innocent! Are these your boasted laws? is this your English equity? Have you no more free-

dom in your hearts than this? Did ye but know what real freedom is, ye would feel that nothing upon earth,—neither gold, nor wealth, nor friends, nor pleasures, nor health, nor life itself to the freeman—is half so dear as liberty! If ye take his gold, ye call it robbery; if ye take his life, ye call it murder; but I tell you that every minute and every hour of liberty is more than gold or life; and yet, base hypocritical tyrants, without scruple, and without remorse, you take from your fellow-creatures, on the slightest pretence, the brightest possession of man, the noblest gift of God. Ere you know whether your fellow-creature be guilty or not, ye doom him to the worst of punishments, ye confine him in dungeons, ye fetter his free limbs with iron, ye deny him God's light and God's air, ye make him the companion of devils and of fiends, and then ye find that he is innocent, and send him forth into the world degraded, corrupted, as vile as ye are yourself,—punished without guilt, and robbed of many a long day of golden liberty by those who pretend to dispense justice and who talk of equity. Out upon ye, I say! and out upon your laws! If there were such things as liberty and justice in the land, the very rumour that a fellow-creature was deprived of his freedom for an hour would gather together half the land to see justice done; and he who dared unjustly to deprive a freeman of his liberty would be punished as a traitor against the rights conferred by God. Then would not this bright and beautiful land bear the multitude of prisons that darken the sunshine in every town and village; and speedily the very use of them would be forgotten; for man's heart, ennobled by freedom, would forget crime, or crime, punished on the spot, would be a lesson far more awful. Now ye debase yourselves and your fellow-creatures, and expect them to act nobly; ye punish the innocent with the worst of punishments, and expect them to refrain from guilt. If I am innocent of the crime with which I am charged,—and God knows, and ye all know, that I am—let me go free. If I be guilty, punish me with death, but take not away my liberty. Death were light, but one other night in a dungeon would crush my very soul!'

There was something so strong, so fiery, so impetuous, in the whole tone and manner of the gipsy, that the magistrates, taken by surprise, sat silent and attentive till he had concluded an appeal which they certainly had not expected. 'There is some reason in what you say,' answered Mr. Simpson, mildly, 'and, perhaps, if we had tasted a few hours' imprisonment ourselves, we should not be so ready to send others to that fate, as we are found too often. However, now answer me, prisoner. You have declared that if the murderer of the late Lord Dewry were set before you, you could recognise him, and swear to him. I ask you, therefore, do you see him now?'

A powerful emotion, which he could not resist, made the peer suddenly turn away as the magistrate thus addressed the gipsy, and Pharold's dark, keen eyes fixed sternly upon him. For several long, terrible, anxious moments the gipsy was silent, and many were the strong and agitating passions which struggled in his heart, and threw their alternate shadows over his countenance; but at length he replied, in a low but solemn and distinct voice, 'I have said that I could tell, but I have not said that I would; and I now say that, come what will to myself, I will accuse no man.'

The magistrates gazed at each other for a brief space, both surprised and perplexed; but at that moment there was heard the sound of chariot wheels, the step of a carriage violently thrown down, and a considerable bustle and speaking in the passages beyond. The next instant the door of the hall was thrown open, and a gentleman entered, with his hat still on his head, and a large fur cloak cast round him, as he had got out of his carriage.

'I really must have the hall kept clear,' exclaimed Mr. Simpson. 'We are here in private deliberation, and no one must be admitted.'

The stranger, however, without paying the slightest attention, walked straight up the middle of the hall; and laying his hand upon the gipsy's arm, as he passed the spot where he stood, 'I have come,' he said, 'to deliver an innocent man.' The next moment he advanced to the table, and taking off his hat gazed round upon the magistrates.

The effect produced upon several persons present was no less strange than sudden. The peer, with a countenance as pale as ashes, a quivering lip and haggard eye, staggered up from his seat, grasped the arm of the intruder, and holding him at arm's length, gazed in his face, with an expression of doubt, and surprise, and horror. Mr. Arden rubbed the glasses of his spectacles, exclaiming 'Good God! good God! This is very strange! It can't be—no, it can't be!'

'It is! it is!' exclaimed the peer, falling back into his chair, and covering his eyes with his hands. 'It is! it is! thank God! oh! thank God! and the deep groan which accompanied his expression of joy, far from lessening its force, seemed to speak that the load of worlds was taken off his heart.

'In the name of Heaven, sir, who are you?' exclaimed one of the younger magistrates.

'Who is he?' exclaimed the gipsy, 'who should he be but William Lord Dewry. There are plenty here who must know him well.'

'And none better than myself,' cried Mr. Arden. 'My lord, are you living or dead?'

'Living, sir,' replied the person whom we have hitherto known by the name of Sir William Ryder. 'Had I not believed, gentlemen, that in this hall I have as much right as any one, I should not have intruded upon your deliberations; but as I learned this morning that my friend Pharold here, to whom I owe my life, was brought before you on a charge of taking it, I felt myself bound to interfere. You must,

therefore, permit me to be present at your further deliberations.—Edward,' he continued, 'you had better retire. We have matter for much thought and for much emotion between us, which were as well confined to ourselves alone.'

'But, my lord! but, my lord!' exclaimed Mr. Arden, 'here is an accusation made formally against your brother, also, of the same crime with which the gipsy was charged.'

'Who made it?' exclaimed Lord Dewry, looking reproachfully at Pharold.

'Not I,' answered the gipsy,—'I bring a false accusation against no man.'

'At all events, sir,' rejoined the peer, turning to Mr. Arden, 'it must be sufficiently evident to all, that my brother, whatever may have been our personal differences, cannot be guilty of my murder, as I am here alive and well. I say again, therefore, that you had better retire, Edward, and leave me to conclude this business as I see fit, unless, indeed,' he added, 'unless you are inclined to contest either my identity or my rights.'

'No, no, no!' cried the other, starting up vehemently, and clasping his hands together, while the burning tears of intense emotion rolled rapidly over his cheeks. 'So help me God, I would not lose the knowledge that you are living for the highest rank and noblest fortune that the earth could give; and I tell you, William, that to lay down at your feet that which I have wrongfully possessed, to give up to you wealth and station, and retire to poverty and obscurity, will be the happiest act of my whole life. It will! as there is truth in Heaven, whatever my conduct heretofore may have caused you to believe—and now I leave you.'

'That is one step at least,' said the peer. 'Fare you well for the present. I will join you soon;—and now, gentlemen,' he continued, turning to the magistrates, as his brother, with a slow and faltering step quitted the hall,—'and now let us proceed, as quickly as possible, to render justice to a man who has been erroneously accused, and subjected already to some loss of liberty,—a loss which I know is more bitter to him than the loss of life would be.'

'Why, my lord, one would think you had turned gipsy yourself,' said Mr. Arden, 'you speak so exactly the same sentiments which he has himself expressed.'

'I have mingled much with persons who feel the same ardent love for uncontrolled liberty,' replied the peer, somewhat dryly, 'and it is therefore that I wish at once to proceed to those matters which may instantly set this good and honest man at liberty. It is evident, gentlemen, that the charge against him must instantly be discharged, and therefore it may be better to order those unworthy handcuffs to be taken instantly from his wrists.'

'Not so fast, my lord,' said Mr. Arden, who was not well pleased with the tone in which the peer replied to him, and who had also a strong disposition to commit every one who was committable. 'Although your sudden, miraculous, and very strange reappearance, must of course put an end to all proceedings relative to a murder which has not taken place, yet there is another charge of a nature equally grave against the prisoner, which renders it impossible to discharge him in the summary method which you seem inclined to urge. There is a charge of deer-stealing followed by murder, in both of which crimes it is pretty evident that the prisoner has taken part. I should like to know, too, before I part with him, whether the whole story that he told of your being shot on horseback had any foundation, or was a mere invention.'

'In regard to the last point I will satisfy you at once,' replied Lord Dewry, 'as far as I ever intend to satisfy any one. I was met by a man on horseback, as I believe the gipsy told you, who demanded money of me, and on my refusing it, somewhat harshly indeed, he did fire at and wound me. My horse took fright, and plunged into the river; I fell from the saddle, deprived of all sense; and had not that good man, Pharold, leaped into the stream, dragged me out, and given me into the hands of those who tended me with kindness and wisdom, my fate would not have been doubtful for a moment. In regard to my after conduct, private motives determined it, into which no one has any right to inquire. They were such as satisfied my own heart and my own understanding, and that is sufficient.'

'And, pray, my lord,' demanded Mr. Arden, 'were you acquainted with the person who wounded you? Could you swear to him?'

'I am not making a charge before you, as a county magistrate,' replied Lord Dewry; 'but telling you an anecdote as an old acquaintance; and let me add, that my story is done. In regard to any farther charge against Pharold, there is, I think, by this time sufficient evidence collected at the hall door to prove that he took no part either in the destruction of the deer or the violence offered to the gamekeepers. If you will order the persons who were present to be called in you will soon be satisfied.'

'I beg your pardon, my lord,' said Mr. Simpson: 'I am most happy to see you once again, when such a thing appeared impossible; but still I am afraid the course you suggest cannot be pursued.'

'And why not, sir?' demanded Lord Dewry; 'I believe that I have the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Simpson, though time has somewhat altered his features: if so, I address both a humane and a reasonable man; and I ask why cannot the plain and straightforward course I propose be pursued at once?'

'Let them have their way, William de Vaux! Let them have their way!' cried the gipsy, whose dark features had been working under the influence of many a contending passion since his friend had appeared. 'Let them have their way! One and all they are set in their own hearts to do injustice. What, indeed, are they here for, but to dispense that kind of injustice they all law? Let them have their way! They are

but working out the inevitable will of fate; and though they bring the curse of innocent blood upon their head, they needs must do it.'

'If your lordship, during your long absence, have not forgot entirely the customs of this country,' replied Mr. Simpson, as soon as he could make himself heard, 'you will perceive at once, that, as one of the unfortunate victims of this deer-stealing affray has died in this very house, not half an hour ago, it is our bounden duty not to discharge a prisoner against whom a charge upon oath of participation in the crime has been made by an eye-witness, until the coroner shall have sat upon the body, and returned a verdict; nor have we, I believe, any right to take the matter out of the coroner's hands, by previously examining the witnesses, which must afterwards appear before his jury. I am grieved to oppose you, I am grieved to inflict farther imprisonment on a man of whose innocence I do not entertain any strong doubts; but Harvey, the head keeper, has sworn that the prisoner was present, aiding and abetting, when Sir Roger Millington was wounded, and we should not be justified even in receiving bail till the coroner's jury have returned their verdict.'

Lord Dewry bit his lip, and remained silent for a few moments, while Mr. Arden rubbed his hands, and elevated his eyebrows with the air of a man who considers all opposition silenced; and the gipsy eyed the bench of magistrates with a look in which scorn was the only expression that tempered hatred and indignation. 'Pray, sir, how long must it be ere the coroner can be summoned?' demanded the peer. 'You know not what you are inflicting upon a man as honest as any one present. To him every hour of his freedom is more than life; and I could give you fully sufficient proof to show that, while his innocence of the crime which is charged against him is clear, the punishment inflicted on him by imprisonment cannot be estimated by the feelings of other men under such circumstances.'

'The coroner cannot even be summoned to-day, my lord,' replied Mr. Arden; 'and consequently, it must be to-morrow or next day ere the gipsy can be liberated, even if the result be as favourable to him as you expect. But what are two or three days spent in a snug warm room to a man who has never known anything better than a hovel in a sandpit? Where is the great hardship? I see no very severe infliction.'

'To him it is the most severe,' replied Lord Dewry; 'and if it be possible——'

'Cease, cease, William,' cried Pharold, in a bitter and earnest tone; 'you degrade those noble lips, by pleading in vain to men who can neither understand your heart nor mine. Besides, it matters not, it matters not. The long weary line of life has come to its end with me. All that I had to do is done. I have seen you break through all your good and wise designs, all your humane and generous scruples, for the purpose of defending and delivering me; I have seen you return to your home, and claim your own; and so far I have seen my utmost desire. But hear what I have seen more,' he continued with a rising tone, while his eye flashed, his dark cheek flushed, and his brows knit together,—'hear what I have seen more, William de Vaux, and then see whether I ought to care for anything else after. I have seen my people mock my care, and refuse my counsels! I have seen one of my own tribe betray me, in order to liberate himself! I have seen the wife of my bosom take part in the scheme for delivering me over to imprisonment and death, by the means of my best affections! I have spent a whole bright autumn night in a prison! I come forth into the day with bonds upon my hands, and I hear myself condemned, without crime, to the torture of a longer slavery in chains and stone walls!' As he went on, he spoke more and more rapidly, and his eye rolled over the magistrates, as he lashed himself into phrenzy, by a recapitulation of his sufferings and his wrongs. 'But think not,' he continued furiously, 'think not that bolts, or bars, or walls shall keep me in another night, in the living tomb into which ye have thrust me! No, no; there is always a way for a bold heart to set itself free! Thus, thus I spurn your chains from me;' and by one great effort of skill and strength he slipped his hands out of the handcuffs, which were somewhat too large, and dashed them down into the midst of the hall.

'Constables! constables!' shouted Mr. Arden.

'You call in vain, hard, stone-hearted man,' cried Pharold, shaking his clenched hand at him, 'you call in vain;' and bounding to the side of the hall on which the tall windows had been thrown open, he set one foot upon the secretary's table, and with a single spring reached the high window sill, catching with his hand the small stone column on which the casements hung. There he paused for one moment; and turning his head, exclaimed, 'William de Vaux, noble William de Vaux, farewell,—for ever, and ever, and ever, farewell.'

He let go his hold: he sprang forward, and was lost to the sight. The next moment the dull heavy splash of a large body falling into the water rose up and was carried by the wind through the open windows into the justice-room.

'Run round, run round,' cried Mr. Arden, to the constables, who were now hurrying in; 'he has escaped through the window; run round there by the outside.'

One or two instantly followed these directions; but another sprang up to the window to mark the course of the fugitive, and point it out to the pursuers.

'He must have jumped into the stream, gentlemen,' said the man, turning to speak to the magistrates, as soon as he had reached the spot where Pharold had stood the moment before. 'He must have jumped into the stream, for there is not footing for a mouse.'

'He did, he did: we heard him,' answered Mr. Arden. 'Look out, and see where he comes to land. My lord, why do you cover your face with your hand? you seem more sorry for the prisoner's escape than I anticipated.'

'It is because I know him better than you do, sir,' answered the peer; 'and I fear that you have driven him farther than you imagine.'

'I can see nothing on the river, gentlemen,' cried the constable, 'but the bubbles and the eddies where he must have gone down.—There's a shoulder, there's a shoulder, I do believe; and his long black hair, as I live:—it is gone again; he is down—I see no more of it.'

Lord Dewry started up and rushed out; but it was in vain that every effort was made to find the gipsy living or dead. The constables who had run round the justice-room declared that they had never seen anything rise. The other who had watched from the window soon became very doubtful in regard to the reality of the objects he had seen floating down the stream. An old labourer, who had been working at a distance, stated that he had remarked something fall from the window of the justice-room into the water, but had seen nothing come to land. The peer, with as many people as he could collect, followed the course of the river for some way; and the constables, though with different views, pursued the same course. In the meanwhile, the magistrates continued in deliberation, as it is called; although it must be acknowledged that their conversation referred much more particularly to, and rested much more pertinaciously upon, the strange return of Lord Dewry, the various circumstances which could have given occasion to his absence, and the various events to which his re-appearance would give rise, than even to the disappearance of the prisoner, and to the after measures to be adopted.

The matter, however, was quite sufficiently interesting to make three quarters of an hour pass unnoticed; and at the end of that time a servant appeared to inform them that as the body of the unhappy gipsy could not be found, Lord Dewry did not intend to intrude upon them again, and that he had only to request that due information of the death of Sir Roger Millington might be given to the coroner.

The magistrates received the message—probably as it was intended—as a hint that their farther presence at Dimden was not desired. Mr. Arden laughed, and declared that he would take care to tease his lordship for his want of courtesy, by asking him unpleasant questions whenever he met him; but Mr. Simpson, on the contrary, looked grave and sad, and as he parted with his fellow-magistrates declared his intention of withdrawing from his official duties. 'I should never,' he said, 'be able to remove from my mind the impression of that unfortunate gipsy's fate, and I should fear that it might have some effect upon the execution of my duty in future.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

DAY had waned, night had overshadowed the world several hours, and Mrs. Falkland, with Marian, had long left the house in which Edward de Vaux lay, ere any sounds intimated that the master of the mansion had returned. Anxious, bewildered, and impatient, De Vaux lay sleepless till ten o'clock, when the rapid rush of rolling wheels, and the quick foot-falls of the horses, as they passed his window, told him that he whom he expected had arrived.

A few minutes elapsed without his appearance in the sick man's room, however, and, with his characteristic impatience, De Vaux concluded that 'the fools had said he was asleep,' and was sending to declare the contrary, when the door was quietly opened, and the person he wished for approached his bedside.

'I am most happy to see you, my dear sir,' said De Vaux, looking up in the fine bland countenance that was bent over him, 'for I cannot sleep—I cannot rest—till I ask you who, who is it that I see?'

'Ah! I perceive that your aunt has betrayed me,' said Lord Dewry. 'She recognised me instantly this morning; but I laid strict injunctions upon her, for many reasons, to keep my secret with you till I returned. But I expected more than was reasonable. There is a proverb against a woman keeping a secret.'

'No, no,' said De Vaux: 'she did not exactly betray you. She let a few words accidentally fall, that only served to rouse my curiosity, which she then refused to satisfy.'

'And what said Marian?' demanded the other, with a smile.

'Oh, she said nothing on the subject,' replied De Vaux, 'but she looked happier than ever I beheld her; and that too seemed to confirm some vague surmises which my aunt's words had called up. But yet I cannot believe it—it is impossible—I knew you myself as Sir William Ryder, in America—every one knew you by that name there—and I cannot believe the wild fancy that has taken possession of me.'

'It is nevertheless true,' replied the peer. 'Sir William Ryder has slept for more than twenty years in a little village churchyard in Ireland, and I am—what I suppose you suspect—your uncle. Agitate yourself with this matter no more to-night, my dear boy: suffice it,' and he pressed his nephew's hand kindly in his own, 'suffice it that I am proud to have Edward de Vaux for my nephew, and shall rejoice to acknowledge him as my son.'

The words were oil and wine to the heart of Edward de Vaux, but still there was something

wanting. 'Thank you,' he replied, still holding his uncle's hand in his own; 'but yet one word more before you go:—that dreadful story that the gipsy told me—that story that drove me almost mad—it is not, it cannot be true. My father did not—could not——'

'Edward,' replied his uncle, gravely, 'on no account must I do wrong to the memory of a noble-hearted man. The gipsy told you true, as far as he knew the truth. Nay, do not shudder: there are many palliating circumstances which he did not know, but which I will relate to you hereafter, in order to calm and tranquillise your mind. In the meantime be satisfied with knowing, that, as far as I am concerned, all that was painful in the past shall be forgotten and buried in oblivion for ever. Nor, indeed, would I, even to you, so far withdraw the veil from things gone, as to give any explanation, had it not been by my authority and directions—under a mistaken view of your character and heart—that the gipsy related to you as much as you already know. Your knowledge of thus much renders it necessary for your own peace that you should know more; which I will tell you as soon as you are well. Rest assured, however, that all which you have yet to hear is good and not evil, and will tend to alleviate and soften what is past.'

With such information Edward de Vaux was forced to rest contented during the whole of the following week, for he could draw no more from his uncle; and he feared, by questioning any one else upon the subject, to raise suspicions which he trusted were as yet quiet in the minds of all others.

The rest of the little world, however, in which these events had taken place, were not so soon satisfied. The immediate neighbourhood of Dimden and of Morley House was, of course, more agitated than the rest of the county; for there it may be said that the stone had dropped into the water, and though the rippling circles that it made extended far and wide around, yet each eddy was fainter and fainter, of course, as it became further removed from the centre. In the immediate vortex, however, not only for nine days, but nearly for nine months, all was gossip and rumour and confusion.

Every one had his own distinct report of the transactions which had taken place in regard to the return of the old Lord Dewry; every one had his own version of the story; and as neither the peer himself, nor any of his family, gave either encouragement or refutation to any of the statements, but held a stern and rigid silence upon the whole affair, every one was left to enjoy his own version undisturbed, and to make himself sure that it was the right one, by any logic that he thought proper to use.

There is no such diffusible a substance in nature as truth; for though an infinitely small piece of gold can be spread over a wire that might girdle the great earth, yet a much less portion of truth will serve to gild a much greater quantity of falsehood. Thus, in all the stories that were current, it is more than probable that some portion of truth existed; and many of them, aided by curious inquiry and shrewd conjecture, came very near the real facts of the case.

The good-natured world of course anticipated all the disagreeable things that were to happen. Law suits innumerable were prognosticated; Lord Dewry was to compel his brother to refund the long enjoyed rents of his estates; the brother was to deny his claim and rights altogether; the marriage between Edward de Vaux and his cousin was to be broken off; and some persons even anticipated that the lover would shoot himself, and the lady die of consumption.

None of these events, however, did really take place. Lord Dewry showed himself in no hurry to take possession of his estates either at Dimden or at Dewry Hall, but his title was not the less generally recognised and his rights undisputed. His brother, indeed, lay for many weeks ill at Dimden House; and, under the influence of feelings, which those around him did not rightly comprehend, besought Lord Dewry not to visit him till his strength was recovered, or till his death was near.

Edward de Vaux still remained at his uncle's cottage at the little town of ——, tended by its owner with all the care and affection of a father. His recovery was somewhat tedious indeed; and it was long ere the surgeons permitted him to rise. From that period, however, his convalescence proceeded more rapidly, and the kind tone of all his uncle's conversation,—the hope, the cheerfulness, the sunshine, that beamed through it all,—tended to soothe his mind, and turn it from everything that was painful in his situation. At length it was announced that he might with safety drive over to Dimden, to see his father; and on the day preceding that on which he went, as soon as the short twilight of winter was over, Lord Dewry ordered his doors to be closed against all the world; and walking up and down the room—as was his custom when he spoke on matters of deep interest—while his nephew lay on the couch beside him, he entered into the long promised explanation of his past conduct.

'I need not recapitulate, my dear boy,' he said, 'all that you have already heard, nor tell you how bitterly I suffered from a loss, the pain of which can never be wholly forgotten. At the time it nearly drove me mad. At all events it made me look upon everything in nature through a false medium, made me hate mankind, loathe even the society of my best and dearest friends, and find agony rather than consolation in the sight of the infant, which my lost angel had left me, and which to a more sane and less impatient spirit would have been a source of joy and comfort to my latest hour. It was under these circumstances, and with these feelings, that I suddenly met my brother in the neighbourhood of Morley House, while I was riding over to the county town with the purpose of giving him such a sum as I could

spare at the time, but of refusing the greater part of the assistance he demanded. I had many other causes for dissatisfaction in regard to his conduct besides his boundless extravagance; but of those causes we need not speak. I acknowledge that I treated him harshly; and that, not contented with rejecting his demand, I rejected it in that stern and peremptory tone which was in some degree cruel, for grief had hardened me for the time against all those things to which at other moments I yielded most willingly. He pleaded more earnestly, more humbly, than could have been expected from one who had no small share of pride; but I refused to hear, and only repeated my determination. Words of great bitterness passed between us; and at length he drew forth a pistol, saying that nothing was left him but death or dishonour, and that he preferred the former. I remember not the exact words of my reply; but they were galling, bitter, and ungenerous; and as I spoke them, I spurred on my horse. The next moment there came a loud report, a giddiness of my eyes, and I felt myself reel in the saddle. For the moment my powers over my horse were lost; and taking fright at the sound, he plunged down the bank, lost his footing, and slipped into the river. Nay, Edward, look not so distressed, remember the shot might be accidental: my brother was following me eagerly at the time with the weapon in his hand which he had threatened to raise against his own life: a plunge of his horse, a false step, an accidental movement, might discharge the pistol without his will. I am willing to believe it so; and I have never inquired farther. If you are wise, Edward de Vaux—if you are wise, you will inquire no farther either. There are few situations in which doubts are preferable to certainty, but there are some, and this is one. Suffice it that, whatever your father's intention was, he was driven at that moment, both by despair and by a brother's harshness, to a state of mind in which he could hardly be held responsible for his own actions. I forgive him from my heart for that deed, though others have taken place lately which I fear I cannot forgive—at least not as yet. But of these no more: I seek not to be your father's accuser. I would rather exculpate him as far as possible.'

De Vaux sighed deeply, and still kept his hands clasped over his eyes, for he could not but feel that his uncle willingly deceived himself, in order to palliate the actions of his father. 'Let me now turn,' continued Lord Dewry, 'to my own fate and conduct. The wound I had received, though not dangerous,—having passed obliquely along the back of my head and neck, only slightly grazing the bone,—was sufficient to stun and confuse me; and although in the plunge into the water, I was thrown free of the horse, I should certainly have been drowned, had it not been for the activity and courage of the gipsy Pharold. I knew little that passed till I found myself lying on the moss, in the thick wood above Morley Point; with two gipsies standing by me, one of whom was my deliverer. I was still bleeding profusely; and Pharold was in the very act of sending his comrade for help to bear me home My first words, however, were directed to stop him; and I besought the companion of my boyhood to have me carried to the tents of his people, and to conceal my escape from every one. The very first impulse on recovering my recollection had been to execute a plan, which had often occurred to me within the last few weeks, previous to that time, of abandoning state, and station, and society altogether, and wasting away the rest of my days in grief and mourning. Had I been a Roman Catholic, at my wife's death, I should certainly have devoted myself to the cloister; and the only consideration which had prevented me from quitting England and all my former connections, had been the thought of the inquiries and the search that would be made for me, and the annoyance to which such proceedings might subject me. Now, however, the opportunity was before me. I easily gathered, or rather divined from the circumstances in which I found myself, that no one was acquainted with my being still in life, but the gipsy and his comrade: I knew that my child, with an ample fortune and numerous connections, would be well protected and cherished by my sister; and I resolved instantly to seize the only opportunity I might ever have of quitting, without inquiry or pursuit, scenes that were full of painful memories, and society which I detested. The rest was easily arranged. I felt that I was but slightly wounded. Pharold would have done whatever I chose to dictate on earth; and I was borne to the gipsies' tents, and tended with as much care and skill as if I had lain in a palace, surrounded by friends and servants.

'None knew me personally but Pharold himself; and he pledged himself solemnly to conceal the fact of my existence from every one. It was agreed that his tribe should instantly remove to a distance, carrying me with them; while he remained, in order to watch the subsequent proceedings of my family, and give me information thereof. He was absent for several days; and when at length he rejoined his people, I found that he had been himself arrested, and in some degree suspected of having murdered me. He told me, however, that my brother had been the first to assert his innocence, and to effect his liberation. This conduct pleased me; and I resolved to linger in England some time longer, in order to mark your father's after proceedings. Through the exertions of Pharold, I learned all that took place. I found that, however he might have acted in other circumstances, my brother acted nobly towards my child; and I took some pleasure, the first I had known for months, in viewing the emotions of his heart through the conduct to which they led. The pleasure, however, was of a very mingled nature; and at length I pre-

pared to set out for Ireland, with the intention of proceeding thence to America. At Holyhead I removed from the tents of the gipsies, with whom I had hitherto continued, because I was aware that Sir William Ryder, an old acquaintance both of my brother's and my own, was to visit Pharold on Edward's account, in order to insure more perfectly the gipsy's silence. He came at length, but in coming his horse took fright, threw him, and nearly killed him on the spot. He likewise was borne into the gipsies' tents, and for some days hovered between life and death. I saw him often, without being seen, and many a time as I stood in the shadow, while Pharold conversed with him, I heard him express bitter sorrow and repentance for all the follies into which he had been led, and depict vividly the writhings of a noble spirit under the consciousness of having dipped deeply in vice and become a participator in crime. I became interested in him, and determined, in other lands—for he also was following exactly the same track towards America as myself—to let him know of my existence; which would at least relieve a part of the load under which he suffered. He partially recovered, and proceeded to Ireland; but he never reached America: for ere he could embark, the consequences of the injuries he had received in the fall assumed a severer character, and at a small inn, in a small and wretched Irish port, I found him dying and alone. His surprise on seeing me had nearly killed him; but he soon regained composure, and I remained with him till his last hour.

'By his advice, and authorised by his own hand, I took his name; and by means of papers which he gave me at his death, have received ever since the annuity of a thousand per annum, which my brother had settled upon him: nor did I think myself unjustified in either of these actions, for I only assumed a rank inferior to my own, and received money which to all intents and purposes was mine. However, as Sir William Ryder had a numerous acquaintance, it became necessary to fix my abode in such a spot as would remove every chance of my assumed name being questioned. My feelings too at this time led me to seek solitude, and an entire change, not only of scene but of all the circumstances of life. Thus I retired to the spot where you found me, during the late war; and there in the midst of savage life, and various sources of interest and excitement, I gradually recovered calmness and peace. Of my life in America I need give you no picture, as you have seen how it passed; and I have now only to explain farther the motives of my return.

'Every human thing is weak in its resolves, and I not less than others: but still, in some degree, it is happy that it should be so; for our determinations are always the children of circumstances, and upon circumstances also must their execution ever depend.

'Like a madman and a fool, I had fancied that in Marian's mother I had found imperishable happiness; and when she was suddenly snatched from me, my whole feelings, my very soul, seemed turned into bitterness and disappointment. In bitterness and disappointment, then, I had resolved never to love another human being, and to cast off every tie that could bind me to human affections: but time brought resignation and consolation: and a longing, a thirst, to see my child and my native land often came upon me with overpowering force. I sought not to resume wealth or station. I sought not to mingle again in cultivated society; but the yearning of the heart of a father and a man, towards my daughter and my country, were sometimes hardly to be resisted.

'That my child was well, happy, and protected, I learned from the constant correspondence which I kept up with the gipsy Pharold; and, at the same time, the interest which I took in the wild tribes around me, and the love they evinced towards me, acted as a strong tie to the land in which I had settled. I wavered often, but I resisted long; till, at length, I became acquainted with your admirable friend Manners, and through him first personally knew yourself. Your very name was full of interest to me; but how much was that interest increased when, by some casual words which passed between you and your friend, I learned that you were destined to become the husband of my only child. All the faults of your father's character rose up before my imagination; his very faults towards your mother were remembered; and when I pictured to myself my dear Marian suffering under similar conduct, my heart was in an agony of doubt and apprehension. From that moment I watched your every word and action with eager anxiety, striving to judge your mind and heart. I did judge you, Edward, and I judged you wrongly. There was a fastidiousness, an irritability, an impatience, a degree of pride, that put me strongly in mind of your father; and although I thought I saw some nobler traits, yet I was anxious, doubtful, ill at ease; and I determined at any risk, at any cost, to try you to the uttermost, ere you received the fate of my child into your hands. I did try you, Edward, and somewhat too severely; and both for having mistaken your nature, and made you suffer deeply, I now ask your forgiveness. At the time you left me, I was engaged in negotiating the purchase of a large tract of land to be reserved for certain tribes of Indians, but a larger sum was required than I could command; and this, with the other circumstances I have mentioned, hastened my return to England. I arrived in my native country even before you did; but a thousand difficulties surrounded me which I had not foreseen; and my anxiety and eagerness made me act with less caution than I should have done. I had no agent in whom I could confide but the gipsy Pharold; and although he wrought in everything exactly under my directions, yet a thousand circumstances, over which we had no control, turned our actions from their course, and led to results that neither

of us anticipated. My intention was not to claim either my name or my estates, if I found that you were worthy of my child; but I have been forced forward, from step to step, as if by the strong hand of fate, till at length it became an imperative duty to disclose myself, in order to deliver the innocent from persecution. One satisfaction, however, I have obtained, which is, that I can now feel unbounded confidence in the man to whom I leave the happiness of my child in charge. Remember also, Edward, that I have resumed my own rights, without compromising the honour or reputation of your father——'

'Indeed! indeed!' cried De Vaux, starting up, and grasping his uncle's hand. 'Thanks, thanks, my dear sir! That is a blessed relief indeed! But will not people suspect——'

'They cannot do so reasonably,' replied Lord Dewry. 'The secret, my dear boy, remains with you and me alone, and never to a living creature shall it pass my lips, as I hope for happiness hereafter.'

'But the gipsy!' cried De Vaux, 'the gipsy!'

'The gipsy is no more!' replied his uncle, a shade coming over his countenance. 'Persecution and severe laws have driven him to despair, and despair to death. And now, Edward, to-morrow you are about to visit your father: in regard to letting him know what information you possess, act as you shall think fit. Were I in your circumstances, if possible, I should conceal from him that I knew aught beyond common report; but if you do communicate to him the knowledge you have obtained, add that for all and every fault towards myself I forgive him from my heart and soul, but that his conduct towards Pharold, the gipsy, rests dark upon my mind; and that, perhaps, it would be better if we did not meet again till time had softened the remembrance. Present him, Edward, with this packet also. It contains a deed which will prevent him from feeling any great change of fortune from my return.'

De Vaux coloured as he took it; and his uncle added,—

'You must not again make me deem you proud, Edward.'

'No, no, my dear sir,' replied De Vaux. 'What I have suffered has not only been a trial, but will, I trust, prove a cure: for the errors that you saw and justly feared, were fully as real as apparent. I cannot but feel pained, however, that we should have so small a right to expect—to expect——' He paused, hesitated a moment, and then added,—'to expect bounty at the hand which now bestows it.'

'Call it not bounty, my dear Edward,' answered his uncle, 'nor couple yourself with others in any shape, for in this deed you are in no degree interested. The fortune which Marian inherits from her mother will render you independent, till my death renders you wealthy. And now to conclude, ere I wish you goodnight:—I have been forced to speak to you long of your father. In doing so, though I have tried not to spare my own faults, I have been obliged to dwell for long upon his; but I have done so once for all, and I never more mention them again, either to his son, or to any one else. It has been as painful for me to speak, as for you to hear. It is over; and now, goodnight!'

We might dwell longer upon the feelings of Edward de Vaux; but we have only space left for his actions. The next morning early he set out to visit his parent, and it was late ere he returned. When he did so, however, he announced to his uncle that, although still unwell, his father had quitted Dimden, and removed a few stages on his journey to a remote part of the country, in which he had determined to fix his residence.

'Of course, my dear sir,' he added, 'every inducement, but one, would lead me to remain here, in the scenes wherein I have been brought up, which are full of sweet recollections, and which contain her I love the best on earth. Nevertheless, he is my father; and I cannot suffer him to linger through the hours of sickness, in sorrow, dejection, and solitude, when, perhaps, the society of his son may give him consolation, or, at least, afford some diversion to his thoughts. To-morrow, therefore, I will see Marian; and then, if the surgeons will let me, will set off to follow my father. As soon as his illness is terminated,' and he spoke with a look of pain and apprehension, 'I will return, and claim a promise which is more valuable to me than life; and in the meantime, I know that none who are dear to me, will think the worse of me, for having in this instance preferred duty to happiness.'

Lord Dewry made no opposition to his purpose, and it was accordingly executed. Two months elapsed without any event of importance. Lord Dewry took possession of his rights again, and rumour and gossip, at every fresh incident in our drama, revived more and more faintly, till at length they died away, and gave place to newer things. The body of the gipsy Pharold was never found, and a vague report spread over the country that he was not dead, but had returned to his people, and had been seen in several places by persons who were acquainted with his person; but the origin of this report could not be traced, and certain it is that The Gipsy never again presented himself before any of the family of De Vaux. The tribe which he had led disappeared from the country, and whither their wanderings conducted them, or what was their after fate, the writer of this book cannot tell, though it appears that Mr. Arden, that indefatigable magistrate, pursued them with his usual vigour on the charge of deer-stealing and murder, but was unsuccessful in the attempt to identify any of the parties. In the meanwhile two inducements led Lord Dewry to establish his permanent residence at Dimden rather than at the newer mansion which his brother had inhabited; first, that it was full of memories that he loved; and, secondly, that it was

near those who were the dearest to him on earth. Colonel Manners, for his part, had prolonged his stay at Morley House for some time; but he then returned to London, promising faithfully to renew his visit when the same cause which had brought him first into that part of England was again urged as a plea for revisiting it. To the surprise of all his military acquaintances, however, shortly after his arrival in the capital, Colonel Manners resigned the command of his regiment, and retired upon half-pay. Various causes were assigned for this proceeding, but the real motive lay hidden in his own bosom deeper than he liked to own even to himself.

While these events were passing, Edward de Vaux wrote often to his uncle, and still more frequently to Marian; but at the end of two months the peer received a letter in which his brother's handwriting was faintly to be traced. It was short, and to the following effect:—

'My Lord,—

'I am dying, and a few days are all that remains to me of life. I therefore venture to ask that you would see me once more before we part—perhaps for ever. I would fain receive your forgiveness from your own lips. I would fain tell you how that remorse—which led me on to new crimes and more intense sufferings at every step while it was the companion of terror and despair—has conducted me to repentance and consolation, now that the burden has been lightened by your return. I have not only wronged you, but I have fearfully wronged others, and I acknowledge it with sorrow and with shame. Nor will I attempt to excuse or palliate any part of my conduct; for you, whose life has passed without spot, cannot tell the goading power of that fiery scourge with which one great crime drives us on to a thousand more in order to conceal it. My cruel, I might almost say my insane persecution of an unhappy man who, as I hear, is now no more, had such feelings for its cause; but I know too well that if my deep and bitter repentance be not accepted by the Almighty, it will be no vindication of a great crime to urge that it was the consequences of another. In regard to my offences towards yourself, I have been punished by twenty years of those torments which have been assigned to hell itself—the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched. But this is not enough; and if I did not trust that the deep repentance which I feel may obtain some better expiation of my offences than my own sufferings can afford, I should die without hope. I do hope, however, that mercy may yet be found; and oh! my brother, let me beseech you to encourage that trust by seeing me, and assuring me of your full forgiveness ere I go to another world.'

The peer lost not a moment, and arrived at his brother's bedside before the last scene was over. He found in him, however, scarcely a trace of what he had been even three months before. At that time, intense mental exertion and activity had apparently given him power to bear up under all the load that pressed upon his heart; but the sudden reappearance of his brother, and the events which accompanied it, seemed to have broken, in a moment, the staff under his hand, and he had fallen at once into age, decrepitude, and decay.

Lord Dewry and Edward de Vaux returned not long after to Dimden Hall in deep mourning; and though joy certainly sparkled in the lover's eyes, as he once more held Marian to his heart, yet for many weeks he was grave and sad, and only recovered his cheerfulness by degrees. Nor, indeed, even then did Edward de Vaux ever resume the same demeanour which he had formerly borne. Sorrows, anxieties, and humiliation had rendered him grave, but they had nevertheless in no degree made him less amiable in the eyes of those that loved him. On the contrary, whatever had been frivolous, or fastidious, or irritable in his nature, had been removed; and in the trials he had undergone he had cast away the impatient pride, which was the worst quality he had possessed, and had obtained a calm dignity, which had a better and a nobler foundation. Marian de Vaux did all she could to soothe, to comfort, and console him; and in the end, if there was anything on earth of which he was proud, it was of the love and the conduct of her he was shortly to call his bride. As soon as De Vaux urged the fulfilment of the engagement between Marian and himself, he met with no opposition, and the day was fixed. Manners was immediately informed of the fact; and, according to the invitation he received, came down to Morley House a fortnight before the time appointed for the marriage. Even six or eight months will work their change in every one; and Isadore Falkland remarked that Colonel Manners neither seemed in such good health, or such good spirits, as when last she had seen him; but ere the ceremony took place, in the air of the country and the cheerful society which he now enjoyed, he had recovered both, and only now and then gave way to a moment or two of absent thought.

All was now gaiety and cheerfulness, and as nothing occurred either to delay the wedding again, or to embitter the after lives of Edward and Marian de Vaux, we shall pass the whole over with the fewest possible words—they were united, and were happy.

But one scene more, and we have done. On the day succeeding that of the wedding, there was, according to the custom of that time, a grand and solemn dinner given at Morley House to all the grave and reverend seniors in the neighbourhood. It was now the height of summer; and though men sat long and drank deep in those days, yet people who were sufficiently reasonable to condemn the practice, and sufficiently firm to contemn an idle sneer, could rise from the table when they liked, even then. Thus, about an hour after the ladies had re-

tired, and just as the sun's lower rim touched the horizon, Colonel Manners, who had been strangling a whole generation of yawns, rose and sauntered to the window. Mr. Arden, who had sat next to him, instantly seized the decanter, and exclaimed, 'Come, come, Colonel, your glass is charged.'

'Thank you,' answered Manners; 'I do not drink any more.'

'Pooh, pooh,' cried the magistrate; 'no flinching, Colonel; your glass is charged—charged to the muzzle; and a gallant soldier like you will never refuse to fire it off.'

'I am on half-pay,' answered Manners, with a smile; and moving towards the door, notwithstanding all Mr. Arden's objurgations, he left the room.

In the drawing-room he found the ladies scattered in various parties, and engaged in various occupations. Mrs. Falkland was paying such attention to her guests as the circumstances required; but Isadore, as if she had quite forgotten them, was standing at the far bay window, looking at the setting sun, and thinking.

Manners advanced as quietly as possible to the same spot, and spoke a few words to Miss Falkland, which she answered in the same tone. It was a low one. The conversation might thus have gone on for a long time, without disturbing any one; but Lady Margaret Simpson, who sat at the other side of the room, was fond of being a third; and in about five minutes she crossed over and joined them.

'Well, Colonel Manners,' she said, 'I have not been able to speak a word to you all dinner time, and I wanted to talk to you about the wedding. Has not this been a very fortunate termination to all that bad business?'

'Most satisfactory, indeed,' answered Manners, with a glance towards Isadore, who looked vexed and provoked. 'I doubt not that De Vaux and his fair bride are fully of your opinion.'

'Oh, they of course think so,' rejoined Lady Margaret; 'and there can be no doubt that marriage is a very right and very proper thing, when fortune and rank and all that agree. Do you not think so, my dear Miss Falkland?'

'Certainly, madam,' answered Isadore, in a tone which argued a doubt whether she should laugh or cry; 'I daresay it is a very proper thing.'

'Then now tell me,' cried Lady Margaret, in a gay and happy tone of raillery,—'then now tell me, why you—who I know have had three very good offers indeed—why you yourself do not marry? Tell me the truth, now.'

'Oh! certainly I will,' answered Isadore, half gaily, half pettishly. 'It is, I suppose, because I do not think it worth while to marry without love; and if the man that I could love does not choose to propose to me, it is quite impossible, you know, that I can propose to him.'

God knows whether the colour that spread over Isadore's face came from within or without,—whether it was a rush of warm blood from some deep source in her heart, or the warm beams of the setting sun reflected from the damask curtain on her cheek. However that might be, she felt that the crimson was growing too deep, and turning round, upon some light excuse, she left the room. Manners remained for a moment or two to hear some more of her ladyship's pleasantries, and then, declaring that he could not abandon, even for the pleasure of her society, his sun-set walk in the garden, he strolled out through the ante-room, which was not the way that Isadore had taken. When he reached the lobby, however, he remembered that there was a certain music-room, of which he had remarked that Isadore Falkland had lately become extremely fond, and as he had by this time acquired a strong liking for the things that she liked, he turned his steps thither instead of to the garden.

No sooner did he open the door, than he beheld Miss Falkland seated near the window, with a handkerchief in her hand, engaged in the somewhat sad occupation of wiping tears from her eyes. 'Good God, Colonel Manners!' she exclaimed, as soon as he appeared, 'leave me, leave me, I beg.'

But Manners did not obey. On the contrary, advancing rapidly towards her, he took her hand, saying, 'Miss Falkland, I am either the most happy or the most miserable of men. I have broken through all my resolutions; I have exposed myself to love, where I have no right to entertain a hope; I love for the first time, deeply, passionately, sincerely, and it is for you to say whether that passion shall be my curse or my blessing.'

Isadore replied not, but her tears burst forth more vehemently than before; and the hand that Manners had taken remained trembling in his. Manners pressed her to his heart; and Isadore ended her flood of tears upon his bosom.

It was nearly three months after this event ere Isadore Falkland again met Lady Margaret Simpson; and then her ladyship's first exclamation was, 'Goodness, my dear Miss Falkland, they tell me you are going to be married to Colonel Manners! Well, I do declare, when you are so very handsome, it is a great pity that he is so ugly.'

'Ugly!' cried Isadore. 'Ugly! Lady Margaret! He is the handsomest man in all the world!' and she continued to think so to her dying day.

THE END.

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